

THE



DIAL

SEPTEMBER 1924

THE BOUNTY OF SWEDEN

A Meditation

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THIRTY years ago I visited Paris for the first time. The Cabbalist, Macgregor Mathers, said, "Write your impressions at once for you will never see Paris clearly again." I can remember that I had roused him to this by certain deductions from the way a woman at the other end of the Café moved her hands over the dominoes. I might have seen that woman in London or in Dublin, but it would not have occurred to me to discover in her every kind of rapacity, the whole being of the legendary harpy. "Is not all style," as Synge once said to me, "born out of the shock of new material?"

I am about to write as in a kind of diary impressions of Stockholm which must get whatever value they have from excitement, from the presence before the eyes of what is strange, mobile, and disconnected.

II

Early in November a journalist called to show me a Reuter paragraph saying that the Nobel Prize would probably be conferred upon Herr Mann, the distinguished novelist, or upon myself. I did not know that the Swedish Academy had ever heard my name. I tried to escape an interview by talking of Rabindranath Tagore, of his gift to his School of the seven thousand pounds awarded to him, and almost succeeded in dismissing the paragraph

from my memory. Herr Mann has many readers, is a famous novelist with his fixed place in the world, and so in every way fitted for such an honour; whereas I am but a writer of plays which are acted by players with a literary mind, for a few evenings, and I have altered them so many times that I doubt the value of every passage. I am more confident of my lyrics, or of some few amongst them, but then I have got into the habit of recommending, or commending myself to general company for anything rather than my gift of lyric writing, which concerns such a meagre troop.

Every now and then, when something has stirred my imagination, I begin talking to myself. I speak in my own person and dramatize myself, very much as I have seen mad old women do upon the Dublin quays, and sometimes detect myself speaking and moving as if I were still young, or walking perhaps like an old man with fumbling steps. Occasionally I write out what I have said in verse, and generally for no better reason than because I remember that I have written no verse for a long time. I do not think of my soliloquies as having different literary qualities. They stir my interest by their appropriateness to the men I imagine myself to be, or by their accurate description of some emotional circumstance, more than by any aesthetic value. When I begin to write I have no object but to find for them some natural speech, rhythm, and syntax, and to set it out in some pattern, so seeming old that it may seem all men's speech, and though the labour is very great, I seem to have used no faculty peculiar to myself, certainly no special gift. I print the poem and never hear about it again, until I find the book, years after it may be, with a page dog-eared by some young man, or marked by some young girl with a violet, and when I have seen that I am a little ashamed, as though somebody were to attribute to me a delicacy of feeling I should, but do not possess. What came so easily at first, and amidst so much drama, and was written so laboriously at the last, cannot be counted among my possessions.

On the other hand if I give a successful lecture, or write a vigorous, critical essay, there is immediate effect; I am confident that on some one point which seems to me of great importance, I know more than other men, and I covet honour.

III

Ten days pass and a telephone message late at night from a newspaper, and a few minutes later a telegram from the Swedish Minister in London tell me that I have been given the prize. Then comes a letter from the Swedish Minister to tell me that I should be at Stockholm upon December 10th and a letter from the Academy to say that I may if I prefer, have medal, money, and diploma sent to me in Ireland.

I question booksellers in vain for some history of Sweden, or Swedish Literature. Even Mr Gosse's Northern Studies which I read twenty years ago is out of print, and among my own books there is nothing but the life of Swedenborg, which contains photographs of Swedenborg's garden and garden-house, and of the Stockholm House of Nobles built in Dutch style, and beautiful with an ornament that never insists upon itself, and a dignity that has no pomp. It had housed in Swedenborg's day that Upper Chamber of the Swedish Parliament where he had voted and spoken upon finance after the ennoblement of his family.

IV

My wife and I leave Harwich for Esbjerg in Denmark, on the night of December 6th, and find our alarms were needless, for the sea is still and the air warm. The Danish steamboat is about the size of the Dublin-Holyhead Mailboat, but the cabins are panelled in pale birchwood, and when we sit down to supper the table is covered by an astonishing variety of cold food, most of which we refuse because we do not recognize it, and some, such as eels in jelly, because we do. Our companions are commercial travellers and presently we are known, for somebody has a newspaper with my portrait, and a man who has travelled in Ireland for an exporter of Danish agricultural machinery talks to us at dinner. He was in Munster for the first part of our Civil War, and had, when the trains were stopped, found himself in great difficulties, and during parts of his journey, that his motor might escape capture by the insurgents, had moved at breakneck speed, but our Civil War was no part of his business and had not stirred his imagination. He had however discovered a defect in Irish agriculture that was very much a part. Through lack of

warm winter sheds and proper winter food for cattle the Irish farmers had no winter butter, and so Ireland must import butter from his country. Though, as he said, against Danish interests, he had pointed this out to Irish farmers. " 'But you have a government,' they said, 'which looks after these things.' " And now he became really excited—" 'Put that idea out of your heads,' I told them, 'it was ourselves that looked after these things, our Government had nothing to do with it.' "

He asked me why the Irish had so little self-reliance and wanted the Government to do everything, and I said—"Were the Danes always self-reliant?" and after a moment's thought he answered—"Not till the Bishop established his Schools; we owe everything to his High Schools." I knew something of Bishop Gruntvig and his Schools, for I often heard A. E. or some other at Plunkett House tell how he educated Denmark by making examinations almost nothing, and the personality of the teacher almost everything, and rousing the imagination with Danish Literature and History. "What our peasants need," he had said, "is not technical training, but mental."

As we draw near our journey's end an elderly Swede comes to say "good-bye" and he kisses my wife's hand, bending very low, and the moment he is out of earshot the Danish commercial traveller says with a disgusted voice, "No Dane would do that. The Swedes are always imitating the French." I saw that he did not like Swedes, and I asked what he thought of Norwegians. "Rough," he said, "and they want everything, they want Greenland now."

V

At Esbjerg I find a young man, a distinguished Danish poet, sent by a Copenhagen newspaper, and he and I and my wife dine together. At Copenhagen journalists meet us at the railway station and others at the Hotel. When I am asked about Ireland I answer always that if the British Empire becomes a voluntary Federation of Free Nations, all will be well, but if it remains as in the past, a domination of one, the Irish Question is not yet settled. That done with, I can talk of the work of my generation in Ireland, the creation of a literature to express National character and feeling, but with no deliberate political aim. A jour-

nalist who has lived in Finland says—"Finland has had to struggle with Russian influence to preserve its national culture." I ask many questions and one journalist says—"Oh, Denmark is well-educated, and education can reach everybody, as education cannot in big nations like England and America." And he goes on to say that in Denmark "You may dine at some Professor's house and find that you are sitting next your housemaid who is among his favourite pupils, and next morning she will be your housemaid again, and too well-educated to presume or step out of her place." Another, however, a very distinguished man, will have it that it is all wrong, "for people who should hardly know what a book is now read books, and even write them. The High Schools have made the intellect of Denmark sentimental." A little later he says, "We may have a Socialist Government one of these days," and I begin to wonder what Denmark will make of that mechanical eighteenth century dream; we know what Russia has made of it. Another Dane speaks of the Danish Royal Family as "*bourgeois* and sporting, like the English." But he says, when I ask about the Royal Family of Sweden, "Oh, such educated and intelligent people." It is he I think who first tells me of Prince Eugene, friend and patron of Swedish artists, and himself an accomplished painter, who had helped to decorate the Stockholm City Hall, "beginning every day at 9 o'clock, and working all day like the rest, and for two years." And how at the opening ceremony "he had not stood among the Royal Family, but among the artists and workmen," and that it was he who saw to it "that every artist was given freedom to create as he would." Another spoke much of Strindberg, and though he called him "the Shakespeare of Sweden," seemed to approve the Swedish Academy's refusal of recognition. "They could not endure his quarrels with his friends, or that astonishing book about his first wife."

A train-ferry brings us across some eighteen miles of sea, and so into Sweden, and while we are waiting for the train to start again I see through a carriage window many faces, but it is only when a Swedish interviewer says just as the train starts, for there are interviewers here also, "Did you not see all those people gazing at the Nobel Prize Winner?" that I connect those faces with myself. Away from the lights of the station it is too dark to see anything, but when the dawn breaks, we are passing through a forest.

VI

At the Stockholm station a man introduces himself, and reminds me that I met him in Paris thirty years ago, and asks me to read a pamphlet which he has written in English upon Strindberg, and especially a chapter called Strindberg and the Wolves. The pamphlet comes to the Hotel a couple of days later, and turns out to be an attack upon the Swedish Academy, and an ardent defence of Strindberg. That outrageous, powerful book about his first wife is excused on the grounds that it was not written for publication, and was published by an accident. He describes Strindberg dressed up according to the taste of one or other of his wives "With cuffs upon his pantaloons" which means I imagine, that like Mr Prufrock "He wore the bottom of his trousers rolled." I had met the writer of this pamphlet in the rooms of an American artist who was of Strindberg's Paris circle, and it was probably there that I heard for the first time of stage scenery that might decorate a stage, and suggest a scene, while attempting nothing that an easel painting can do better. I am pleased to think that something of it may have come from Strindberg whom I seem to remember as a big silent man; for I have always felt a sympathy for that tortured, self-torturing man who offered himself to his own soul as Buddha offered himself to the famishing tiger. He and his circle were preoccupied with the deepest problems of mankind. He himself, at the time I speak of, was seeking with the Furnace and the Athanor for the Philosopher's Stone.

At my Hotel I find a letter from another of the circle whom I remember as a fair girl, like a willow, beginning with the sentence:—"God's blessing be upon your wife and yourself through the many holy men and women of this land."

VII

The Diplomas and Medals are to be given us by the King at five in the afternoon of December 10th. The American Ambassador, who is to receive those for an American man of science who is not present, and half-a-dozen men of various nations including myself sit upon the platform. In the body of the Hall every seat is full, and all there are in evening dress, and in the front row of

seats are the King, Princess Ingeborg, wife of the King's brother, Prince Wilhelm, Princess Margarita, and I think another Royalty. The President of the Swedish Academy speaks first, and I see from the way he stands, from his self-possession, and from his rhythmical utterance, that he is an experienced orator. I study the face of the King, intelligent and friendly, like some country gentleman who can quote Horace and Catullus, and the face of the Princess Margarita, full of subtle beauty, emotional and precise and impassive, with a still intensity suggesting that final consummate strength which rounds the spiral of the shell. One finds a similar beauty in wooden busts taken from Egyptian tombs of the eighteenth dynasty, and then not again until Gainsborough paints it. Is it very ancient and very modern alone, or did painter and sculptor cease to notice it until our own day?

The American Ambassador goes towards the King, descends from the platform by some five or six steps which end a yard from the King's feet, and having received the Diploma and Medal, ascends those five or six steps walking backwards. He does not go completely backwards, but sideways, and seems to show great practice. Then there is music, and a man of science repeats the movement, imitating the Ambassador exactly and easily, for he is young and agile, and then more music and two men of science go down the steps side by side, for they have made discoveries that are related to one another, and the Prize is divided between them. As it would be impossible for two men to go up backward, side by side, without much practice, one repeats the slanting movement, and the other turns his back on Royalty. Then the English Ambassador receives Diplomas and Medals for two Canadians, but as he comes from the body of the Hall he has no steps to go up and down. Then more music, and my turn comes. When the King has given me my Medal and Diploma and said, "I thank you for coming yourself," and I have bowed my thanks, I glance for a moment at the face of the Princess Margarita and move backwards towards the stair. As I am about to step sideways like the others, I notice that the carpet is not nailed down, and this suddenly concentrates my attention upon the two parallel lines made by the two edges of the carpet, and—as though I were hypnotized—I feel that I must move between them and so straight up backward without any sidelong movement. It seems to me that I am a

long time reaching the top, and as the cheering grows much louder when I get there, I must have the sympathy of the audience.

All is over, and I am able to examine my Medal, its charming, decorative, academic design, French in manner, the work of the 'nineties. It shows a young man listening to the Muse who stands young and beautiful with a great lyre in her hand, and I think when I look at it, "I was good-looking once like that young man, but my unpractised verse was full of infirmity, my Muse old as it were, and now I am old and rheumatic, and nothing to look at, but my Muse is young. I am even persuaded that she is like those Angels who in Swedenborg's vision move perpetually 'towards the day spring of their youth.'"

At night there is a banquet, and when my turn comes, I speak of Swedenborg, Strindberg, and Ibsen. Then a very beautiful stately woman introduces herself with this sentence, speaking slowly as though English were unfamiliar: "What is this new religion they are making up in Paris, that is all about the dead?" I wonder who has told her that I know anything of psychical research, for it must be of that she speaks, and I tell her of my own studies. We are going to change the thought of the world, I say, to bring it back to all the old truths, but I dread the future. Think what the people have made of the political thought of the eighteenth century, and now we must offer them a new fanaticism. Then I stop ashamed, for I am talking habitual thoughts, and not adapting them to her ear, forgetting beauty in the pursuit of truth, and I wonder if age has made my mind rigid and heavy. I deliberately falter as though I could think of nothing more to say, that she may pass upon her smiling road.

VIII

Next day is the entrance of the new Crown Princess, and my wife and I watch it, now from the Hotel window, now from the quay-side. Stockholm is almost as much channelled by the sea as Venice and with an architecture as impressive as that of Paris, or of London, it has a finer situation than either. It seems to shelter itself under the walls of a great palace, begun at the end of the seventeenth century. We come very slowly to realize that this building may deserve its great architectural reputation. The

windows, the details of the ornaments, are in a style that has spread everywhere, and I cannot escape from memories of houses at Queens Gate, and even it may be from that of the Ulster Bank at Sligo which I have hardly seen since my childhood. Is it not indeed a glory and shame of that architecture that we have been able to combine its elements in all sorts of ways, and for all sorts of purposes, as if they had come out of a child's box of wooden bricks? Among all these irrelevant associations, however, one discovers at last a vast, dominating, unconfused outline—a masterful simplicity. The Palace is at the other side of the river, and away towards our left runs the river bordered by tall buildings, and above the roofs of the houses towards our right rises the tower of the new City Hall, the glittering pole upon the top sustaining the three crowns of the Swedish arms. Copenhagen is an anarchy of commercial streets with fine buildings here and there, but here all seems premeditated and arranged.

Everywhere there are poles with flags, and at the moment when the Crown Prince and Princess leave the railway station for the Palace, the salvos of artillery begin. After every salvo there are echoes, and I feel a quickening of the pulse, an instinctive alarm. I remember firing in Dublin last winter, the sudden noise that drew like echoes from the streets. I have to remind myself that these cannons are fired out of gaiety and good-will. There are great crowds, and I get the impression of a family surrounded by loyalty and affection.

IX

The next night there is a reception at the Palace, and the Nobel prize winners are among the guests. We wait in a long gallery for our turn to enter the Throne-room, and upon the black coats of civilians, as upon the grey and silver of the Guards, lie the chains of the three Swedish orders. Among the black-coated men are men of learning, men of letters, men of science, much of the intellect of Sweden. What model has made all this one wonders—Goethe's Weimar, or Sweden's own eighteenth century court? There may be, must be, faults of commission or omission, but where else could a like assembly be gathered? I who have never seen a court find myself before the evening is ended moved as if by

some religious ceremony, though to a different end, for here it is Life herself that is praised. Presently we walk through lines of sentries in the costume of Charles XII, the last of Sweden's great military Kings, and then we bow as we pass rapidly before the tall seated figures of the Royal Family. They seem like stage Royalties. Just such handsome men and women would have been chosen by a London manager staging, let us say, some dramatized version of *The Prisoner of Zenda*. One has a general impression of youthful distinction, even the tall slight figure of the old King seems young. Then we pass through the Throne-room into a vast hall hung with Gobelin tapestries, which seem in the distance to represent scenes like those in a Watteau, a Lancret, or a Pater. Their green colour by contrast turns the marble pillars above into a dusky silver. At the end of the hall musicians are sitting in a high marble gallery, and in the side galleries are women in white dresses, many very young and handsome. Others upon the level of the floor sit grouped together making patches of white among the brilliant uniforms and the black coats. We are shepherded to our places and the musicians play much Swedish music which I cannot describe for I know nothing of music. During the first long wait all kinds of pictures had passed before me in reverie, and now my imagination renews its excitement. I had thought how we Irish had served famous men and famous families, and had been, so long as our nation had intellect enough to shape anything of itself, good lovers of women, but had never served any abstract cause except the one, and that we personified by a woman, and I wondered if the service of a woman could be so different from that of a court. I had thought how before the emigration of our poor began, our gentlemen had gone all over Europe, offering their swords at every court, and that many had stood just as I, but with an anxiety I could but imagine, for their future hung upon a frown or a smile. I had run through old family fables and histories to find if any man of my family had so stood, and had thought that there are men living, meant by nature for that vicissitude, who had served a woman through all folly because they had found no court to serve. Then my memory had gone back twenty years to a summer when a friend read out to me at the end of each day's work Castiglione's commendations and descriptions of that Court of Urbino where youth for certain brief

years imposed upon drowsy learning the discipline of its joy, and I remembered a cry of Bembo's made years after: "Would that I were a shepherd that I might look down daily upon Urbino." I had repeated to myself what I could remember of Ben Jonson's address to the Court of his time: "Thou art a beautiful and brave spring and waterest all the noble plants of this Island. In thee the whole Kingdom dresseth itself, and is ambitious to use thee as her glass. Beware thou then render men's figures truly and teach them no less to hate their deformities than to love their forms . . . thy servant but not slave, Ben Jonson." And now I begin to imagine some equivalent gathering to that about me, called together by the heads of some State where every democratic dream could be fulfilled, and where all men had started level, and only merit, acknowledged by all the people, ruled. The majority of governing men and women, certainly all who had supreme authority, would have reached that age when an English novelist becomes eligible for the Order of Merit. Times of disturbance might indeed carry into power some man of comparative youth, a man of fifty years perhaps, but I think of normal times. Here and there one would notice their sons and daughters, perhaps even their more dutiful grandsons and grand-daughters, even a timid protégé perhaps, but in the eyes of these younger persons, though not in their conversation, an acute observer might discover disquiet and a restless longing for the moment when they could slip away to some night-club's compensating anarchy. In the conversation of old and young there would be much sarcasm, great numbers of those tales which we all tell to one another's disadvantage, the wit of exasperation and attack, for all would display to others' envy the trophies won in a struggle where all fight for party or for self.

Then suddenly my thought runs off to that old Gaelic poem made by the nuns of Iona. A Swedish or Danish ship had been cast on the rocks, and all Royalties on board had perished but one baby. The nuns all mothered the baby, and their cradle-song, famous for generations after, repeated over and over—praising in symbol every great man's child, every tested long-enduring stock—"Daughter of a Queen, grand-daughter of a Queen, great grand-daughter of a Queen, great great grand-daughter of a Queen." Nature always extravagant, scattering much to find a little, has

found no means but hereditary position for sustaining the courage of those who have not yet started upon the race and are cowed by the authority of those who lie wearied at the goal. Perhaps indeed she created the family with no other object and may even now mock in her secret way our new ideals—equality of man, equality of rights—meditating some wholly different end. Certainly her old arrangement, in all pursuits that gain from youth's recurring sway, or from its training in earliest childhood, surpassed what begins to be a world of old men. The politic Tudor Kings, and the masterful descendants of Gustavus Vasa were as able as the American Presidents, and better educated, and the artistic genius of old Japan continually renewed itself through Dynasties of Painters. The descendants of Kanoka made all that was greatest in the art of their country from the ninth to the eleventh century, and then it but passed to other Dynasties, in whom as Mr Binyon says, "The flower of genius was being continually renewed and revived in the course of many generations." How serene their art, no exasperation, no academic tyranny, its tradition as naturally observed as the laws of a game or a dance. Nor has our individualistic age wholly triumphed in Japan even yet, for it is a few years since a famous player published in his programme his genealogy, running back through famous players of the Middle Ages; and one day at the British Museum Print Room I saw a Japanese at a great table judging Chinese and Japanese pictures. "He is one of the greatest living authorities," I was told, "the Mikado's hereditary connoisseur. The fourteenth of his family to hold the post." May it not be possible that the use of the mask in acting, and the omission from painting of the cast shadow, by making observation and experience of life less important, and imagination and tradition more, made the arts transmittable and teachable? But my thoughts have carried me far away.

X

Near me stands a man who is moved also by the spectacle of the Court, but to a Jacobin frenzy. Swede, Englishman, American, German, what does it matter seeing that his frenzy is international? I had spoken to him earlier in the day and found him a friendly, even perhaps cultivated man, and certainly not the kind of man

who is deliberately rude; but now he imagines that an attempt has been made to impose upon him. He speaks his thoughts aloud, silenced occasionally by the music, but persistent in the intervals. While waiting to enter the Throne-room he had been anxious to demonstrate that he was there by accident, drifting irresponsibly, no way implicated, as it were, and so sang from time to time a little catch "I am here because I am here," had commented abundantly upon all he saw, "The smaller the Nation, the grander the uniform. . . . Well—they never got those decorations in war," and so on. He was certain that the breastplates of the sentries were made of tin, but added with a meditative voice, as though anxious to be fair, "The breastplates of the English Horse Guards are also made of tin." As we came through the Throne-room I had heard him say—"One of the Royalty smiled, they consider us as ridiculous," and I had commented, entangled in my dream, "We are ridiculous, we are the learned at whom the little boys laugh in the streets." And now when at a pause in the music, the Queen passes down the great Hall, pages holding her train, he says in the same loud voice as before, "Well a man has not to suffer that indignity," and then upbraids all forms of ceremony and repeats an incident of his school life to demonstrate his distaste for Bishops.

As I leave the Palace, a man wearing orders stops for a moment to say, "I am the Headmaster of a big school. I was the Prince's tutor, and I am his friend."

XI

For the next two or three days we visit Picture Galleries—the Gallery of the National Museum, that of Prince Eugene, that of Baron Tiel. At the National Gallery a number of pictures have been taken down and lean against the wall that they may be sent to London for an Exhibition of Swedish Art. Some one exaggerating the influence in London of the Nobel prize winner asks me to write something to get people to go and see it, and I half promise, but feel that I have not the necessary knowledge. I know something of the French impressionism that gave their painters the first impulse, but almost nothing of German or Austrian, and I have seen that of Sweden for the first time. At a

first glance Impressionism seems everywhere the same, with differences of power, but not of sight or mind, and one has to live with it, and make many comparisons I think, to write more than a few sentences. The great myth-makers and mask-makers, the men of aristocratic mind, Blake, Ingres in the Perseus, Puvis de Chavannes, Rossetti before 1870, Watts when least a moralist, Gustave Moreau at all times, Calvert in the woodcuts, the Charles Ricketts of the Danaïdes and of the earlier illustrations of the Sphinx, have imitators, but create no universal language. Administrators of tradition, they seem to borrow everything, but in reality borrow nothing, and not one of them can be mistaken for another. But Impressionism's gift to the world was precisely that it gave, at a moment when all seemed sunk in convention, a method as adaptable as that box of architectural Renaissance bricks. It has taught us to see and feel, as everybody that wills can see and feel, all those things that are as wholesome as rain and sunlight, to take into our hearts with an almost mystical emotion whatever happens, without forethought or premeditation. It is not, I think, any accident that it is an art that has coincided everywhere with a new sympathy for crowds, for the poor and unfortunate. Certainly it arrived in these Scandinavian countries just at the moment when an intellectual awakening of the whole people was beginning, for whatever I inquire about, I always read, or I am told, that it began with the 'eighties, and was the outcome of some movement of that time.

When I try to define what separates Swedish Impressionism from French, I notice that it has a stronger feeling for particular places. Monet will paint a group of trees by a pond in every possible light, changing his canvas every twenty minutes, and only returning to a canvas when the next day's clock brings up the same light, but then it is precisely the light that interests him, and interests the buyers of those almost scientific studies. Nobody will buy because it is a pond under his windows, or that he passed in his boyhood on his way to school. I have noticed in some house where I lunched two pictures of the Stockholm river, painted in different lights by Eugene Janson, and in the National Museum yet another with a third effect of light, but much as the light pleased his imagination one feels that he cared very much for the fact before him, that he was never able to forget for long

that he painted a well loved, familiar scene. I am constantly reminded of my brother who continually paints from memory the people and houses of the village where he lived as a small child; but the people of Rosses will never care about his pictures, and these painters paint for all Stockholm. They have found an emotion held in common, and are no longer like the rest of us, solitary spectators. I get the impression that their work rouses a more general interest than that of other painters, is less confined to small groups of connoisseurs; I notice in the booksellers' shops that there seems to be some little paper-covered pamphlet, full of illustrations, for every notable painter of the School dead or living, and the people I meet ask constantly what I think of this painter or that other, or somebody will say: "This is the Golden Age of painting." When I myself as I leave the museum try to recall what I have seen, I remember most clearly a picture of a white horse on the sea-shore, with its tints separated by little lines that give it a general effect of mosaic, and certain portraits by Ernest Josephson which prove that their painter was entirely preoccupied with the personality of the sitter—light, colour, design, all subordinate to that. The English portrait painter is sometimes so preoccupied with the light that one feels he would have had equal pleasure in painting a bottle or an apple. But a preference after so brief a visit may be capricious, having some accidental origin.

XII

On Thursday I give my official lecture to the Swedish Royal Academy. I have chosen *The Irish Theatre* for my subject that I may commend all those workers, obscure or well known, to whom I owe much of whatever fame in the world I may possess. If I had been a lyric poet only, if I had not become through this Theatre the representative of a public movement, I doubt if the English committees would have placed my name upon that list from which the Swedish Academy selects its prize winner. Those dog-eared pages, those pressed violets, upon which the fame of a lyric poet depends at the last, might without it have found no strong voice. I have seen so much beautiful lyric poetry pass unnoticed for years, and indeed at this moment a little book of

exquisite verse lies upon my table by an author who died a few years ago, whom I knew slightly, and whose work I ignored, for chance had shown me only that part of it for which I could not care.

On my way to the Lecture Hall I ask an academician what kind of audience I will have, and he replies, "An audience of women, a fit audience for a poet"; but there are men as well as women. I had thought it would be difficult to speak to an audience in a language they had learnt at school, but it is exceedingly easy. All I say seems to be understood, and I am conscious of that sympathy which makes a speaker forget all but his own thoughts, and soliloquize aloud. I am speaking without notes, and the images of old fellow-workers come upon me as if they were present, above all of the embittered life and death of one, and of another's laborious, solitary age, and I say, "When your King gave me Medal and Diploma two should have stood, one at either side of me—an aged woman, and a young man's ghost. I think when Lady Gregory's name and John Synge's name are spoken by future generations, my name if remembered will come up in the talk, and that if my name is spoken first their names will take their turn because of the years we worked together. I think that man and that woman would have been pleased too had they gone beside me to the great reception at your Palace, for their work and mine delighted in history and tradition." I remember as I speak how deep down we have gone, below all that is individual, modern, and restless, seeking foundations for an Ireland that can only come into existence in a Europe that is still but a dream.

XIII

On Friday we visit the great Town Hall which is the greatest work of Swedish art, and the most important modern building in Europe. The Royal Palace had taken ninety years to build, and been the organizing centre of the Swedish art of its time, and this new magnificence, its narrow windows opening out upon a formal garden, its tall tower rising from the quayside, has taken ten years. It too has been an organizing centre, but for an art more imaginative and amazing. Here there is no important French influence;

for all that has not come out of the necessities of site and material no matter in what school the artist studied, carries the mind back now to some old Swedish building, now to Byzantium. I think of but two comparable buildings, the Pennsylvania Terminus in New York, and the Catholic Cathedral at Westminster, but the Pennsylvania Terminus, noble in austerity, is the work of a single mind elaborating a suggestion from a Roman Bath, a mind that supported by the American deference to authority has been permitted to refuse everything not relevant to a single dominating idea. The starting hours of the trains are upon specially designed boards, of a colour that makes them harmonize with the general design, and all other advertisements are forbidden. Even in the stations that the trains pass immediately after leaving, or before entering the Terminus, there are no posters. The mood of severity must be prolonged or prepared for. The Catholic Cathedral is of equal, or greater magnificence in general design, and being planted in a country where public opinion rules, where the subscribers to every fund expect to have their way, is ruined by ignoble decoration, the most ignoble of all planned and paid for by my countrymen. The Town Hall of Stockholm upon the other hand is decorated by many artists, working in harmony with one another and with the design of the building as a whole, and yet all in seeming perfect freedom. In England and Ireland public opinion compels the employment of the worst artists, while here the authority of a Prince and the wisdom of the Socialist Minister of Culture, and the approval of the most educated of all nations, has made possible the employment of the best. These myth-makers and mask-makers worked as if they belonged to one family, and the great walls of hand-made bricks, where the roughened surface of the bricks, their carefully varied size and tints, take away all sense of mechanical finish; the mosaic-covered walls of the "Golden Room," the paintings hung upon the walls of the committee rooms, the fresco paintings upon the greater surfaces with their subjects from Swedish Mythology; the wrought iron and the furniture, where all suggest history and yet is full of invention; the statuary in marble and in bronze, now mythological in subject, now representations of great Swedes modelled naked as if they had come down from some Roman Heaven: all that suggestion of novelty and of an immeasurable past, all that multi-

tude and unity, could hardly have been possible had not love of Stockholm and belief in its future so filled men of different minds, classes, and occupations, that they almost attained the supreme miracle, the dream that has haunted all Religions, and loved one another. No work comparable in method or achievement has been accomplished since the Italian cities felt the excitement of the Renaissance, for in the midst of our individualist anarchy, growing always as it seemed more violent, has arisen once more subordination, design, a sense of human need.

XIV

On Saturday I see at the Royal Theatre a performance of my Cathleen ni Houlihan. The old father and mother are excellent, and the performance differs but little from an exceedingly good Abbey performance, except for certain details of scene, and for differences of interpretation made necessary by the change of audience. Lines spoken by Cathleen ni Houlihan just before she leaves the cottage always move an Irish audience powerfully for historical reasons, and so the actress begins at much the same emotional level as those about her, and then works up to a climax upon these lines. But here they could have no special appeal, so she strikes a note of tragedy at once, and does not try for a strong climax. The management had sent to the West of Ireland for photographs of scenery, and the landscape seen through the open door has an appropriateness and grandeur our poverty-stricken Abbey has never attained. Upon the other hand the cottage and costumes of the peasants suggest a richer peasantry than ours. The management has I think been misled by that hundred pound dowry, for in Sweden where the standard of living is high a farmer would probably have thought it more necessary to feed his family and himself, and to look after his daughter's education, than to save a hundred pounds for her dowry. This affects the acting, for the peasants are permitted to wear a light buckle-shoe indoors, whereas they would in reality have gone barefooted, or worn heavy working boots. Almost the first thing a new actor at the Abbey has to learn is to walk as if he wore those heavy boots, and this gives awkwardness and heaviness to his movements. I do not point this out as an error in the Swedish production, for a symbolic

play like Cathleen should, in most cases, copy whatever environment is most familiar to the audience. It is followed by *She Stoops to Conquer*, and by comparison our Abbey performance of that play seems too slow. Goldsmith's play is not in Sweden, I should think, the established Classic that it is with us, and so a Swedish producer is less reverent. He discovers quickly that there are dull places and unrealities, that it is technically inferior to Molière, and, that we may not discover this also, prefers a rattling pace.

XV

On Sunday morning, while we were packing, a young American poet is announced who has just arrived. "I have been in the South of France," he says, "and could not get a room warm enough to write in, and if I cannot get that room in Stockholm, I will go to Lapland." I have no doubt that he will find it, for all the week our furs have been useless. Houses kept warm by steam heating have had the temperature of summer, and outside it has been so warm that though snow has fallen it has melted immediately. "You have not seen Stockholm," everybody has said, "until you have seen streets, houses, and trees all white with snow."

BLACK MAGIC

BY ROBERT HILLYER

Three friends of mine who know my heart,
I have decreed your death to-day,
And through what means, and by what art,
Who but yourselves could ever say?
I could not suffer you to part
Flinging my secrets on your way.

Who knows through what impetuous word
My lore escapes your careless lips,
Through what small syllable the bird
That was my golden captive, slips
And sings to those who, having heard,
Will slay it with envenomed quips?

That King of Knossos who would build
A Labyrinth around his thought,
Sagaciously and justly willed
Death to the architects who wrought,
And thus the winged word was stilled
Which once set free is never caught.

Friends whom I love, for fear I might
Have cause to love you less, I stir
Three melting forms of wax, and light
Three tapers for three friends that were,
Till three slim phantoms take their flight
Between the whorls of smoking myrrh.



LA CIRQUE ZANFRETTE. BY ANNE MERRIMAN PECK





CHEVAUX DE BOIS. BY ANNE MERRIMAN FECK

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FEW, BUT ROSES

BY F. L. LUCAS

A RECENT writer on Tennyson has suggested as an explanation of the hero-worship of the Victorians that "the more the scientists shook their faith in God, the more did they invest their contemporaries with divine attributes." One may suspect that the cause lay rather in the seriousness with which that age took things generally. But, at all events, that motive has ceased to work with us, and in a Cambridge teeming with savants who split, not the traditional hair, but the atom itself, no devout hand lays wreaths of bay on the steps of Whewell's Court. And whereas enthusiasts swarmed stealthily up the very elms of Farringford to watch a short-sighted laureate disport himself at battledore and shuttlecock, not a head turns now as down King's Parade passes the author of the Shropshire Lad. Not that, in this particular case, one would recommend the most undaunted American "big game" hunter to attempt closer approaches; or that in general any one need sigh for Victorian *Schwärmerei* here again; but there are other extremes. We have learnt to take Professor Housman for granted as a poet; perhaps we have learnt the lesson a little too thoroughly. Must we wait to bury Caesar before we praise him to the full, for the earth to cover it before we realize how much has meant to us this shadow of a great rock in the weary land of modern verse, so boundless and so bare? Professor Housman has given us his "last" poems; so that we can see his work, it is to be feared, already as a whole, if not so steadily as posterity. For that posterity will read him, seems to me as (humanly) certain, as it is dubious if there are more than two other living English poets of whom the same can be said. When *Last Poems* appeared, the reviews paid, indeed, their tributes to his verse and style and beauty—such tributes as adorn the wrappers of half a hundred other poets, in the inflated currency of to-day; but when it came to certain other characteristics, there appeared in their criticisms a tone ludicrously like the reluctant testimony of conjured devils. The view of life that breathes through these poems, the essence of their being, was passed gingerly over, with

a mild deprecation, perhaps, of some particularly defiant utterance, or a pious wish that Professor Housman were less pessimistic—much as one might sigh what an agreeable play Hamlet might be without that depressing prince. Indeed, it recalls the advertisement I received the other day of a selected edition of Voltaire: "*Tout en reproduisant la physiognomie du poète philosophe, l'auteur s'est appliqué avec le plus grand soin à ne rien laisser passer qui pût choquer les susceptibilités de qui que ce soit,*"—a recommendation calculated to make the dead chuckle in his grave.

But one cannot believe that posterity, if statesmen allow us that luxury, will fall into this half-hearted, impertinent folly. Wondering what the Georgians really thought and felt about existence—turning wearily from piles of little poets who busied themselves scrabbling illuminated miniatures in the margin of the book of life, and with slight disgust from such typical Georgianisms as Sir Oliver Lodge and Canon Barnes exchanging bouquets of pious nothings before edified audiences at the British Association—they will find here one answer to their question, one personality among so many echoing masks, one reading of life, wrong maybe, but blurred and corrupted at least with no optimistic emendations, and rendered into English of a purity that English literature has not surpassed. Some, rejecting his interpretation, will yet recognize, if they are human, that in moods, at least, they too have felt the same, and will hope, if they are wise, that though differing they enjoy him none the less; and some, sharing his view of life, will know that they enjoy him yet the more. And nobody will deprecate.

In pre-war Cambridge, which seemed so much more exciting than it does now (though this is doubtless mere middle-age) one of the greatest of excitements was the newcomer's discovery everywhere, in its little red binding, of the Shropshire Lad—the expression, so long inarticulately wanted, here found at last, of the resentment, the defiance, the luxuriant sadness (sentiment, I suppose, some will call it) of youth. With what expectation one waited in the Lecture Theatre of the Arts School amid an audience that seemed unworthily sparse, for the first sight of the poet—and in what perplexity one went away! Could this quiet, immaculate figure, setting straight, with even-voiced, passionless, unresting minuteness the jots and tittles of a fifth-rate ancient whose whole epic was not worth one stanza of his own—could this be the same? Only the lines about

the mouth with their look of quiet, unutterable distaste, only the calm, relentless, bitter logic, as of destiny itself, with which some sprawling German commentator was broken into little pieces and dropped into the void, seemed in the least recognizable features. One came away feeling as if one had been watching a disguised Apollo picking the oakum of Admetus—divinely—but oakum! Had I known them then, I should surely have thought of those lines of Matthew Arnold to (of all things in this connexion) a Gipsy Child:

"Is the calm thine of stoic souls, who weigh
Life well, and find it wanting, nor deplore:
But in disdainful silence, turn away,
Stand mute, self-centred, stern, and dream no more?"

And had I been a prophet, I should have thought too of the verse that follows:

"Once ere the day decline, thou shalt discern,
Oh once, ere night, in thy success thy chain.
Ere the long evening close, thou shalt return,
And wear thy majesty of grief again."

But in those days Last Poems were beyond our hopes, and none dreamed of a second sunrise that should make the Sphinx of the desert once more a Memnon of the dawn. It was cause for gratefulness enough that the Shropshire Lad was there—that and the poetry of Morris—to bear one through the war.

Arnold, indeed, the poet-professor of the sister University with his classicism and his Virgilian majesty of sorrow, is Professor Housman's nearest kin in English literature; and for a third to join with these, we must look to the disdainful yet tender brevity of Landor. In no other three of our poets have the spirits of Greece, Rome, and England found that happy mixture of their elements which lives in them—the grace and lucid sadness of the flutes of Hellas, the proud glitter and the stab of the short Roman sword, the sweetness and strength of the English countryside. Arnold doubted more, and wailed because he doubted, till harder men lost patience with his "nibbling and quibbling" about belief; he was

sometimes prim; and, unsurpassed as his best work is, and far wider in its range, he had not, technically, the sureness of the later poet's touch. Landor was less subtle and, likewise, less sure. It is a curiosity of literature that so late in the development of English poetry it should have been possible to bring harmonies so new, so invariably perfect out of some of its most hackneyed metres. Swinburne produced many of his miracles by brilliant modifications of old metrical forms. Beddoes recaptured, as no one since has done, the secret magic of Elizabethan blank verse. But Professor Housman modifies little and recaptures nothing; though the Carolines used some of his verse-forms to perfection, they are not like him. And when one sits down and puzzles where one has seen anything really akin to this Melchizedek, there comes only the unexpected half-answer: "In Heine." The belief that there is here more than coincidence is strengthened when one recognizes in the flower of Sinner's Rue no other than the German's *Armesünderblum*—the blue floweret that grows at cross-roads on the mounds of the slayers of themselves.

But this does not go far towards explaining how his effects are produced; it is easy to docket the artifices he so boldly and openly uses, such as the assonance and alliteration of:

"Ah, past the plunge of plummet,
In seas I cannot sound,
My heart and soul and senses,
World without end, are drowned.

His *folly* has not *fellow*
Beneath the blue of day
That gives to man or woman
His heart and soul away.

There flowers no balm to sain him
From east of earth to west
That's *lost* for everlasting
The heart out of his breast;"

or the haunting

"From all the woods that autumn
Bereaves in all the world."

It is simple to note the repetition carried even beyond Roman bounds till, once, it becomes a little self-caricaturish:

"The goal stands up, the keeper
Stands up to keep the goal."

But the charm endures where these devices are not; there are so many strings to this bow with its sweet swallow-song—pause and shift of stress, fingering and vowel-play, and, above all, the skill which keeps the diction of these lyrics so simple and close to the directness of prose, without ever transgressing that fatal boundary, by its perfect intermingling of the unexpected word with the speech of everyday, of the unexpected thought with the looked-for conclusion. Indeed, his Shropshire lads talk with just that "wild civility" for which Herrick praised his love:

"There flowers no balm to *sain* him . . ."

"From far, from eve and morning
And yon *twelve-winded* sky . . ."

"But men at whiles are sober
And think by fits and starts,
And if they think, *they fasten*
Their hands upon their hearts."

But perhaps the supreme example of the sudden sting the verse leaves in the hearer's heart, as with all the wonder of a serpent's suppleness it glides away, is in the last but one of all the poems:

"On russet floors, by waters idle,
The pine lets fall its cone;
The cuckoo shouts all day at nothing
In leafy dells alone;
And traveller's joy beguiles in autumn
Hearts that have lost their own."

In the second volume, as a whole, indeed, if there is any development, it is an extension of this device of sudden check and unexpected pleasure to the rhythm also:

"What sound awakened me, I wonder,
For now 'tis dumb.
 'Wheels on the road, most like, or thunder:
 Lie down; 'twas not the drum.'"

or, best of all:

"Wenlock Edge was umbered,
 And bright was Abdon Burf,
 And warm between them slumbered
 The smooth green miles of turf;
 Until from grass and clover
 The upshot beam would fade,
And England over
 Advanced the lofty shade."

And, with this, there goes a growing boldness in the surprises of the thought, a use of metaphors quite "metaphysical," such as that ironic "foolscap" wherewith night's cone-shaped shadow crowns the earth eternally, or that last mantle which cured Dick's lifelong hatred of the cold:

"Fall, winter, fall: for he,
 Prompt hand and headpiece clever,
 Has woven a winter robe,
 And made of earth and sea
 An overcoat for ever,
 And wears the turning globe."

These things produce their complete effect just because the power to contrive them is controlled with a rigid economy; so that the general impression these lyrics leave is of a strength that never needs to strive or cry, a beauty whose quality is never strained. "Schiller," observed Coleridge, "sets you a whole town afire. But Shakespeare drops you a handkerchief." And, as there is no strain, so there are no collapses; if we could spare anything, it would be some of the poems on soldiers and on gallows. But such exceptions are few, and the most serious challenge to Housman's position will be his want of bulk. I do not think that need trouble us greatly; these

poems, as Meleager said of Sappho's, are "few, but roses." The poems of Catullus are likewise few.

But the spell of this poetry does not live merely in its technical perfections, in its pure beauty, in the happy way it has won a province of its own, like Hardy's Wessex, in the heart of England, in the flowery grace with which it wears its ancient learning, so that the reader recognizes on Shropshire lips, with a stab of spiritual homesickness, the well-known accents of Sarpedon and Achilles or some echo of the laconic fortitude of Rome; and the water, not of "Nile" only, but of Simois and Scamander, Ilissus and Tiber,

"spills its overflow
Beside the Severn's dead."

It is, as Milton demanded, not only "simple" and "sensuous," but "passionate" also, as the perfect in style often fails to be; and it is "criticism of life" after Arnold's heart. Not popular criticism, indeed; pessimism so unflinching and inflexible is to be found in few English poets apart from Hardy and James Thomson. And even Mr Hardy has sometimes wavered and of late grown mysteriously to resent the name; there is nothing in Professor Housman's work that could lend itself to such irony as the recent spectacle of babes and sucklings chanting a judiciously selected chorus of *The Dynasts* in honour of the Prince's visit to Dorchester.

This attitude to life many good people find bewildering and indecent:

"Terence, this is stupid stuff;
You eat your victuals fast enough."

Browning, at the rare moments when the voice of a groaning creation pierced his complacent ears, took refuge in the plea that one could really only speak for oneself and that he found life very tolerable. To others, life seems like the cave, not of Plato, but of Polyphemus; to a favoured few the ogre grants the boon of being last devoured; are they expected gratefully to rejoice in the commodiousness of the cavern and the courtesy of the Cyclops? The injuries of existence are deep enough without that insult; and from the conventional consolations tossed like straws to the drowning,

they turn to the last shreds of certainty, their own feelings before the shadow-pageant of phenomena, their power to appreciate the irony of the comedy, the beauty of the tragedy of things. A Swift, frenzied by the spectacle of the "oppression that makes a wise man mad," cries "*Vive la bagatelle*":

"And the feather-pate of folly
Bears the falling sky."

A Thomson, again, finds in the defiance of despair despair's one palliative, as the old king of Pontus in poison poison's antidote.

"Mithridates, he died old;"

and it is not the open eyes of disillusion that stumble worst,

"as you and I
Fare on our long fool's-errand to the grave."

Pessimism is not depressing to those who have faced it, and pride may be one of the deadly sins, but it gives not the ignoblest human answer to the menace of eternity. The oracles are dumb, the odds impossible; but—

"The Spartans on the sea-wet rock sat down and combed their hair."

It is of poetry like this that Cardinal Newman's words are true: "Poetry is the refuge of those who have not the Catholic Church to flee to and repose upon." Those who deprecate its pessimism do not realize that they are asking for the building without the foundation, the body without the life. If there were not the despair, there could not be the passion; if there were not the tragedy, there could not be the majesty of grief.

"The troubles of our proud and angry dust
Are from eternity and shall not fail."

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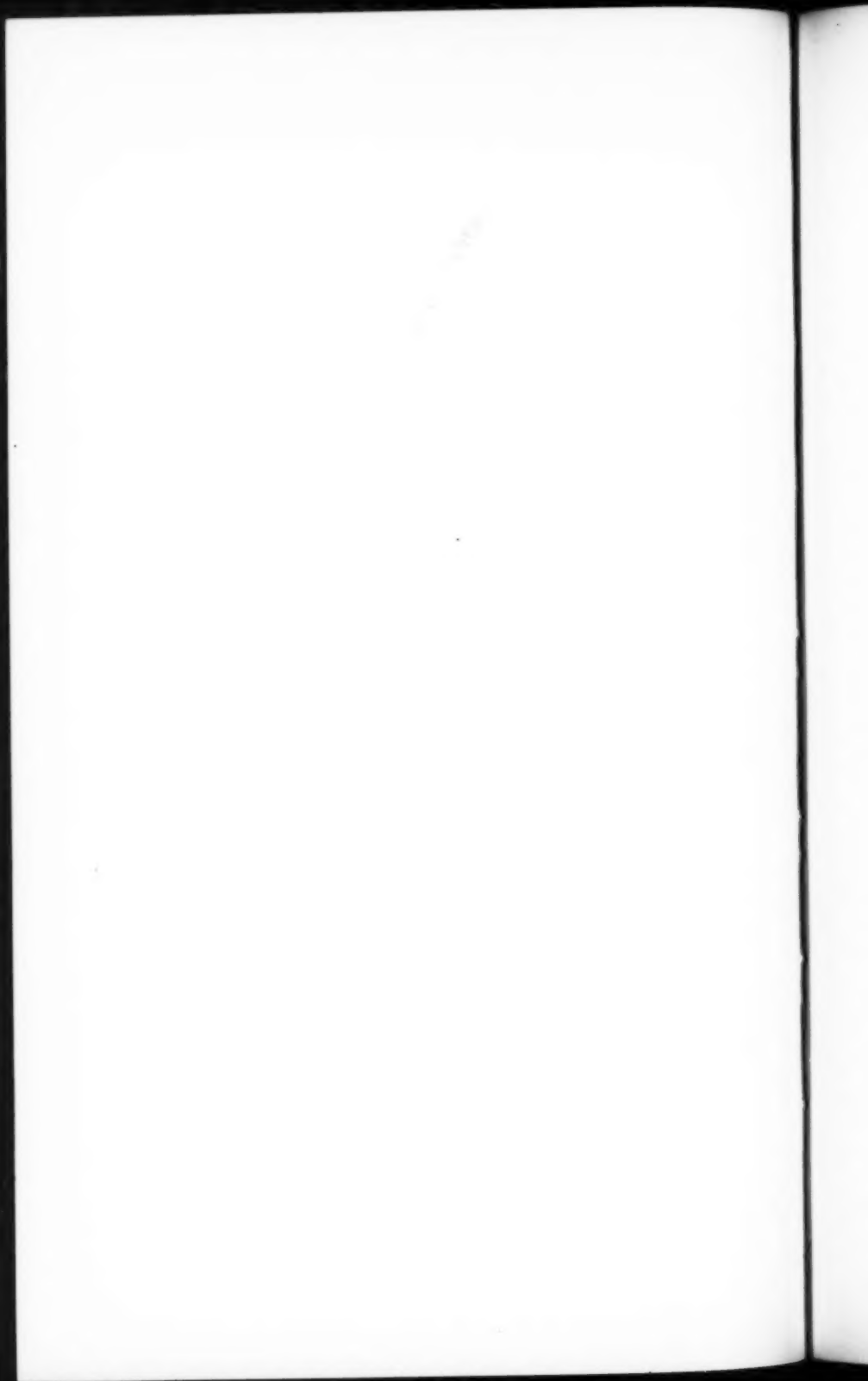
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Saint Thomas' Church; Chicago

CHRIST COMFORTS THE WOMEN OF JERUSALEM. BY ALFEO FAGGI



OCTOBER AT HELLBRÜNN

BY EDWIN MUIR

The near-drawn changeless sky, closed in and grey,
Broods o'er the garden, and the turf is still.
The dim lake shines; oppressed the fountains play;
And shadowless weight lies on the wooded hill.

The close-ranked trees rise separate, as if deep
They listened dreaming through the hollow ground,
Each in a single, far-divided sleep,
While few sad leaves fall heedless with no sound.

The marble cherubs in the wavering lake
Stand up more still, as if they held all there,
The trees, the plots, in thrall. Their shadows make
The water clear and hollow as the air.

So still they stand, the statues and the trees,
On the brown path the leaves so moveless lie,
My footfalls end, and motionless as these,
I stand self-tranced between the earth and sky.

For the earth is dumb and empty, and no weight,
Save the shut sky, curved steep, a stone-smooth tomb,
Weighs on it, and no ground upholds its great
Load of tired land and sea, save empty doom. . . .

The slow dumb afternoon draws in, and dark
The trees rise up; grown heavier is the ground.
And, breaking through the silence of the park,
Farther the viewless fountain flings its sound.

THE EYES OF SAINT SPIRIDON

BY ELIN PELIN

Translated From the Bulgarian by Victor Sharenkoff

SAINTE Spiridon was a poor shoe-maker. Bent over his low table on which his tools were scattered, and giving himself to contemplation of God, he worked all day long. He had rest only when he sat down to eat his dry bread quietly and slowly, or when he raised his eyes to look out of the little window at the beautiful picture of God's world which always was dear to him.

The white cold winter and the golden warm summer pleased him equally well. In the springtime, when the sun melted the snow, Saint Spiridon was fond of listening to the monotonous sound of the drops dripping down from the broken roof of his small shop. He also liked to watch the budding of the lilac and the blooming of the apple tree in the neighbouring garden in front of the church. The sweet aroma of the blossoms filled the small quiet street and entered the narrow shop. On such days Saint Spiridon thought of the heavens with an unusual joy and hope, and sometimes he rose from his little chair, and cast a glance up at them through the window.

At that time he was young and did not belong to the community of the saints. He considered himself unworthy before God, although he had never sinned, and his single thought was to purify his soul to such a degree that it would bloom like the apple tree in front of the church and its aroma would feed the virtues as the white apple blossoms fed the bees.

The young man's spiritual beauty was also reflected in his body, and made him handsome. His face shone with the holy purity of God himself, and over his forehead flitted almost invisibly rose and white clouds as over the sky of a morning in May. His blue eyes, always contemplating heavenly things, had the depth of a lake in which the reflections of all heavenly things twinkled.

The rich and beautiful young women of the town often passed this solitary street where the shoe shop of the young man was;

and while ordering shoes on holidays, they looked for an opportunity to see him. The pious young man was terrified by this, and when he heard joyful women's voices and the rustle of silk gowns, he lowered his pure eyes and did not raise them until calm reigned again in the small street.

To ward off temptation, he put a small box of ashes before the threshold of his shop. Every woman who came to him for an order had to step there, and from the imprint left by her foot he took the measurements for her shoes. In this manner the young man drove away from his soul every desire for woman, which might violate his holy blessedness, and he kept his eyes from seeing the shadow of temptation, and his hands from touching flesh born of lust.

Once when Saint Spiridon was risen from his three-legged stool to look through the small window, and gain cheer from a small cloud with which an invisible little angel was playing in the blue of the sky, a gilded chariot stopped before the small shop, and a young Mohammedan woman came down and knocked on the door. Her veil was open a little, and Saint Spiridon quickly lowered his eyes to the dusty floor in order that the lure of temptation might not enter his soul through them.

The woman opened the door slowly and came in. The beautiful spring day which reigned outside entered with her and remained in the dark barren workshop. Saint Spiridon heard the watchful murmur of the fountain, the amorous fighting of sparrows, the song of a young girl, and the hearty laughter of youths. This cheerful vanity of life entered with the unknown woman and remained there.

The young man bent his head still more, and did not know what to say.

Then the young woman tenderly, softly, and firmly told him to take the measurements for her new shoes.

"Step in the ashes in the small box. Then I will take the measurements from the imprint of your step, kind lady," said Saint Spiridon gently.

The woman gave a short ringing laugh, and it seemed to Saint Spiridon as though a crowd of young men and women were standing in front of his small shop and pelting it with thousands of fresh, sweet-scented flowers. He covered his eyes with his

hands, and repeated his request with such humility that the heart of the young Mohammedan woman was touched.

"No," she said, and was silent. A little later she added: "I wish you to take my measure from my foot."

Then Saint Spiridon got up, took the tape-measure, and without raising his eyes approached the unknown woman. Having gathered up the bottom of her long silk gown, she raised her pretty foot and stepped on the three-legged stool. Saint Spiridon unrolled the tape-measure around the bottom of her foot. At that instant the holy young man lost the clew which united his blessed thought with God, and absorbed in his work he raised his eyes to see what the measure was. Then, out of the corner of his eye, he saw the dainty foot with the delicate dark silk stocking. Something happened in the soul of the blessed young man. A little more and he would be lost for ever. But the firmness of his faith did not leave him. Holiness, which had supported him for a long time, strengthened his will. It rose up against the awakening desires; and Saint Spiridon quickly seized the cobbler's awl from the table, and with a strong hand struck out the eye which had leaned toward temptation. Even as he felt the terrible pain, Saint Spiridon heard the rejoicing of the soul saved from ruin, and in an ecstasy of blessed pleasure once more, he struck harder with the cobbler's awl and put out the other eye. It was not guilty, but in his thirst for purity the young man wished to close up the windows of his soul, by which the rays of sinful and tempting things could enter.

Having become blind, Saint Spiridon could not work any more. He closed up his small shop and went to a wood. There flowed a large river whose banks were overgrown with willow trees and groves of osiers. Gropingly he cut sticks; and as he sat facing the sun, he wove baskets which he gave to the peasants who passed there in exchange for a piece of bread.

Everything around him was wrapped in calmness, tranquillity, and joy. He listened to the splashing of the little fish, and stood on the bank for a long time in silence. The buzzing of the bees, and the delicate sound of the white birch trees which grew all around, filled his pacified soul with pleasure. When he passed gropingly from one place to another, he prayed God to direct his feet lest he trample the ants and the tiny insects creeping in the

grass. And every new breeze, blowing in the morning and evening and dying at noon, gathered sweet aromas from the herbs, flowers, and linden trees, and carried them to the blind saint, feeding his soul with enjoyment.

In the midst of this wonderful calm, the thought of Saint Spiridon, purified a hundredfold, turned to God and contemplated for a long time His wise forgiving smile over the world.

Only one thing worried the holy man: the amorous chirping of the birds in the wood. Saint Spiridon heard the pigeons, the turtle-doves, the nightingales, and other birds alighting on the branches, and their love-affairs troubled him. He collected and threw stones at random in the woods. He waved his arms and tried to drive them away. But they continued to cry, to sing, and to call to one another. In spite of all his efforts, pictures issuing from their passionate activities appeared unwillingly in the mind of the saint; and one day, terrified, he understood that there were other eyes in his soul, and it was impossible to pluck them out. And, bent over the basket which he was weaving, he reflected and understood, that when he had contemplated with his physical eyes he never had met such great difficulty as at that moment, when he was contemplating with the eyes of his closed soul. He was seized by a great anxiety. As he did not know the reason for it, he thought that he had committed a wrong before God, and began to spend the days and the nights in prayer. But in time his soul's peace disappeared entirely.

Once, as he was putting the last touches on a basket, the polluting picture which had caused him to blind himself appeared to him again. Through the eye of his soul, he saw clearly standing before him the beautiful woman with her skirt raised a little, showing the delicate silk-stockinged foot. In vain Saint Spiridon tried to drive away this polluting vision. Wherever his blind face turned, he saw this woman and heard her laugh. The saint began to cry in a loud voice, to pity himself, and to call to God for help. It was in vain. The impure vision emerged and took possession of him. He began to see it as he had not seen it and would not have wanted to see it when his blue eyes were still gleaming. Terrible wishes began to press the blood in his veins. He wanted to pray, but words of love went out from his mouth and echoed through the silent woods, like the cry of an owl.

"My Lord, why dost Thou torment me? I plucked out my eyes to realize Thee, but I am still farther from Thee! Do a miracle, O God!"

And Saint Spiridon fell to the ground to make obeisance. When he rose again and raised his head toward the sky, the beautiful blue eyes, with the depth of a lake in which all the heavenly lights were reflected, gleamed again.

THE MAN IN THE DRESS SUIT

BY ROBERT L. WOLF

Animal that I am, I come to call
With soft ancestral stride, and smouldering blood,
And guarded nuances of speech that fall
Deftly within the well-bred bounds they should;
While hooded eyes, across a saucer-rim
Of Haviland, with half-insistent stare,
Or insolent slow droop, control and trim
The wick of innuendo in the air.

Pity my brother ape who cannot chat
With one whose smiles so scintillate and arch—
His belly-lusts, his brutal days, and that
Starved ignorance of opera-hats and starch:
But most—for that he crassly snares his mate
In no such spangled web of love and hate.

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WITH WIND AND TIDE. BY JACK B. YEATS

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LUCIENNE

BY JULES ROMAINS

Translated From the French by Waldo Frank

VI (continued)

LUNCHEON brought me face to face with Marie Lemiez. I had surely gathered enough material for endless chatter. We sat at our little table, and all my zest was gone. Words and laughter and gesture refused to swing into the easy way of friendship.

Usually, when I came in first, the table-cloth, the empty chair in front of me were beings waiting for Marie, calling her, giving a sort of visible dimension to my own lack of her and to the want which I must go through, all alone, until Marie came in. And when it was I who was late, already at the door I saw my chair propped against the table, saw it, even before I saw Marie, as calling for me. Scarcely a moment, and the disturbance of our coming in was over: the subtle work of getting close once more went on and left no trace. It was as if we had not been apart: to-day was yesterday's luncheon going on. The joy and health of our companionship sounded in the noisy room. The courses were leisurely, and leisured space came between them for our talk, for our eyes meeting each other, for our easeful elbows on the table. What we said, the laughter that leaped from each to each, no jot escaping, made about us a circle of intimate action like a world quite our own and quite sealed: and yet this world did not shut us from our share of the life of the room, any more than it hid us from the eyes of others. We were there as in the centre of a transparent globe.

But now, the boundary fell sheer between Marie and myself. I bore her no ill will. And yet this almost palpable bar lay like a frontier upon the table and marked off the world of Marie from my own world. I felt like saying as might a child: "*My plate, my knife, my piece of bread.*" I should have found it more natural if they had served us, not as usual from a single dish, but individual

portions. Instinctively, with no effort of concealment, I simply kept still about everything I had learned. With the freedom to analyse myself, I should have admitted that it was only fair to speak of the concert, to mention M Pierre Febvre, to ask Marie if she knew him or knew about him. But Marie was full of talk. She had some complicated story to tell me about the girls at the high school. All that I had to do was to answer briefly; there was no long pause in her words to force me to suggest a topic of my own, and to deprive me of this excellent excuse for forgetting all about the "news" which of course I owed her.

And yet, as we got up from table, it did occur to me that I had acted strangely, and scarcely like a friend. Just a few days ago, we had made a pastime of extravagant speculations about the Barbelenets; the least detail had to be offered loyally to the common game. Why now this reticence? But it was almost too late to give my report. Would it not seem as if I had thought the thing over, hesitated about telling it? If I spoke now, would the news not have a false importance, become almost personal? At the outset, it would have been so simple to have said: "Marie, my dear little Marie, lend me your ears! Here is news. Here is the secret of the Barbelenets." But to have just thought of it at the close of our talk? . . .

Marie helped me abruptly out of my discomfort by taking her leave. She was no sooner out of sight, than the whole problem left me, and my scruples also. One thought, unhampered, held sway in my mind: in less than twenty-four hours I shall once more go down to the station, and cross the fifteen tracks and enter a smoky house that is luminous with desire. . . .

VII

I had no sooner rung than the door opened. It was as if I were the doctor called in an emergency, watched for by anxious faces. The maid was all subtle looks, eye-rollings, half-stifled sighs. Even her manner of taking my coat and hanging it up was eloquent of yesterday's talk, of her confessions. I was no longer an outsider in this hall. I felt clearly that this entrance commanded an approach to an inhabited house. The rear door must lead to the kitchen. Solemn good dishes doubt-

less were prepared there. The Barbelenet house was gloomy, if you like; but not austere, not sterile. I could very well imagine Madame Barbelenet dealing out succulent slices of roast beef; or M Barbelenet in his wine-cellar bent above a little lamp and bottling a superb barrel of Bordeaux. There was something of an Old Master about this place, blackish at first sight, but affluent with reds and gold deep sunken in the shadows.

Marthe was alone to receive me in the parlour. She forestalled my question; her sister was not well, she might not be able to have her lesson, but at all events we were to begin without her. Marthe seemed embarrassed. Her eyes, more tremulous than usual, avoided mine. She hurried to the piano, seeking refuge with her secrets in the drone of scales. But her actions betrayed her even more than her looks. There is too much confession in our eyes. Their language is too full, too crowded, to be quite clear. Here at the keyboard, the soul's disturbance becomes manifest, however one strives to suppress it. Marthe's first few measures were usual enough, a little hastened at most. Now, irrelevant to the music, there came a sudden note so poignant that it was like a knife-point pressed gently to the skin: the skin gives way, the point is in the flesh. . . . A row of notes followed, wilfully calm, laboriously measured, as if to delude me, like some one who has suddenly cried out and now carefully goes on: "What is it? Why do you look at me so?"

I watched with a rather cruel quiet. I watched for the outbreak. Nothing in my mind went warmly to the little girl in her anguish and helped her in her struggle for self-control. How much longer will she hold out against this rising panic? I looked for an explosion, not with curiosity, but with the stranger sense that I, too, somehow, was in this battle. It was as if I sided with her panic against Marthe. How long will she hold out?

Suddenly, the girl doubled over the piano as if she had been struck in the breast: her hands covered her face: she sobbed.

I came and put my arms around her. But I was not really moved: I was doing the proper thing. I was disgusted with my own coldness, I who melted so often before far less poignant sorrow. What was happening to Marthe seemed to me so natural, whatever its details, that my pity became a mere question of form. If anything, I think I envied her who, so young, and surely without

any extraordinary physical charm to call it forth, felt a passion for which other women must wait, and yearn, for ever.

Marthe huddled close in my arms, her whole body was so given up to my embrace, so wheedlingly eager for my comfort, that I was embarrassed. I felt unworthy of this bestowal.

"Sister is wicked," she said at last. "I never did a thing to her. It is not my fault, what has happened."

"You have been quarrelling?"

"She hates me. She has been saying the most dreadful things. She said she wants to die, and it's my fault, and she will throw herself under a train, right in front of the house."

Marthe sobbed. I stood over her, close to the piano. The open music was flush with my eyes. The bulged page gleamed. Numberless black notes, too shiny, too regular, too systematic. The page made me think of modern improvements, of their tedium. I saw an endless straight American street, its houses of cement and brick and stone, its washable walls. I lost no word of what Marthe was saying, I was so alive to the twinging motions in her neck and breast that they seemed actually to be trying to extend to me also, and already my muscles had begun to imitate them: and still I went on with my far distant reverie. Perched high in my mind was a witness who watched these two series of my thoughts, and brought them close and began braiding them together with a mysterious delight, with a malicious refusal to prefer either one to the other. . . .

"You know it would be just like her to do it, only to avenge herself on me, and to make everybody blame me for her death."

"But what is the matter?"

"She hates me. And yet, how can I keep people from finding out at last that she has a bad character, and from detesting her? Is it my fault if her face is so hard, and if there are already two wrinkles at the corners of her mouth? I'll buy her more lotions, if she wants, and if those she has haven't been enough."

"Come, Marthe. You are saying ugly things."

"Not a tenth of what she says to me all day."

"But what awful thing has happened between you?"

"Oh, it's not so mysterious. You'll see for yourself if it is my fault, if I could do anything to stop it. You know our cousin, Pierre Febvre, the man you met here day before yesterday. When

he started coming here, there was no thought of anything, either on his side or on ours. He's mother's cousin. He had six months' leave. They had sent him to F——les-Eaux. He remembered then that we lived close by, and he came to pay us a visit. We asked him to stay to dinner. A week earlier my parents had never thought of his existence. But they'd already had the idea of marrying off my sister, and as soon as they saw him he impressed them as eligible. Pierre has a good place. He is purser on a big Transatlantic liner. My mother approved of him, she likes 'men of the world,' she has never really gotten used to the simple ways of Papa. Pierre Febvre had not the faintest notion what was going on. He's rather thoughtless, to begin with. And he's not in the least familiar with our small-town world, where everything that is done has first to be figured out. I guess he was getting bored at his hotel, he is taking no regular cure there. In our house were two girls to play with. Ten minutes on the train, and here he is. That is all. But you don't know my mother's gift for making people do what they least expect. A month after Pierre's first visit, it was understood as a fact that he was to marry Cécile. There aren't many women with her strength, I tell you. Just think, there hadn't been the slightest declaration, not the slightest explanation. A masterpiece it was. No need even of any one saying yes or no."

"But surely the two must have had some understanding! If your sister and M Pierre Febvre had not been drawn to each other —"

"You don't see. Cécile is far too gloomy a creature to love any one . . . what *Pd* call love. Of course she liked Pierre. No need of Mama's persuading her. As to Pierre, I tell you he simply let himself get trapped. As soon as he found it out, he was sorry."

"Has there been a formal engagement?"

"No. But in Mama's mind, all that remained was to name the day. For instance: announce the engagement just at the end of Pierre's vacation, and have the wedding when Papa retires. Then Pierre began to cool quite visibly toward Cécile. He paid more attention to me. I swear I never led him on. You know me. Remember that from the beginning he had paid just as much attention to me at least as to Cécile; and that, if it hadn't been for

Mother. . . . Then it got to be just terrible for me, bit by bit. Now, Cécile accuses me of treachery. There are nothing but scenes all day long. Just now, she was threatening herself."

"But you, Marthe, what do you say to her?"

"What do you want me to say? At first I told her that Pierre had a right to his preferences: however strong minded they were, mother and she, they were not quite strong enough to force love into a person's heart. But then, when I saw how wrought up she really was, I promised her to do nothing to win Pierre over to my side, to do nothing to upset their plans. I don't like dramas. I am quite ready to give in to my sister, for if I don't the whole house will go to smash. But that isn't quite enough, it seems. They'll not leave me alone, until Pierre stops loving me, until I —"

She fell to sobbing, and I was cruel enough to detect a certain consciousness in her sobs. They were too well timed. I thought of my mother, a hard woman if ever there was one, who could never mention her own dead mother without tears.

"But dear, dear Marthe. This is so serious, you must search deep in yourself. You must! You can't act like a little girl. Are you sure of your own feelings?"

"My own feelings?"

"Why yes—your feelings for M Pierre Febvre. Are you sure there isn't in them just a trace . . . how shall I put it? . . . a tiny bit of rivalry . . . just the least wish to oppose your sister and your family's plans? You care for M Pierre Febvre? Does he mean more to you than all the world? More than your father and mother? Does it seem impossible to live without him? Hard, O impossibly hard to live without him? Is it torture for you, Marthe, to think of him belonging to someone else?"

Marthe gazed at me with anxious eyes: indeed I listened amazingly to myself. I have little taste, as a rule, for the popular *rôle* of confessor and counsellor. I am too aware of the fatuousness, the hypocrisy, the uselessness, that go with it. I object to any one's assuming it with me. But this time, I should have defied any one who had tried to stop me. Marthe glanced away from my eyes, and answered:

"I think I care for him very much: I think I love him."

Her words and their manner seemed full of reservations. I should have understood their modesty and their restraint in def-

erence to me. At school, when one of my friends was asked: "What is the capital of Spain?" or "What is the square of 7?" she would answer "Madrid?" . . . "49?" with just such a sweet questioning in her voice, as if to tell her teacher that even the most obvious fact awaited her approval. . . . But I was not generous. I preferred to go on thinking that this little girl was working herself up to an emotion beyond her.

"And M Pierre Febvre?"

"M Pierre Febvre?"

"Yes, Marthe. Do you feel that he too has made his choice, his final choice?"

"I have confidence in him."

"Perhaps Marthe, if I knew him better, I would not ask you. There's nothing, nothing whatever, in what you have told me, in the least against him. But I wonder, does he take things quite as you do? Sometimes men seek out a girl, show her a great deal of affection, without the slightest intention of giving up their freedom. One must look out, dear! You said yourself, that your mother perhaps too readily assumed that M Pierre Febvre wished to marry Cécile. What if the misunderstanding had merely taken another form?"

Marthe did not answer. She bowed her head, sighed, wiped her eyes. I thought she was getting ready for more tears. Perhaps she chose not to confide in me more deeply. Perhaps her real proofs of the love of Pierre Febvre were not for my ears—or simply did she find it unpleasant to discuss them with me? Perhaps she preferred to go on nursing her sorrow.

Just then, the door opened and Cécile came in: with her something that was almost like reproof. Marthe fell hurriedly to playing, blinked her eyes to catch up the vagrant tears and stuffed the wet handkerchief into her left palm. I made as if I were more interested in the score than in Cécile's arrival. Did she hear us? I asked myself. What have we been saying? Even if she had her ear to the door, what fault can she find with me? Of course, I had said nothing that could compromise me. Still, I felt that Cécile would have the right to resent me because of Marthe's words, almost as much as if those words had been my own. I had heard them. What I had listened to was no longer outside myself, it belonged to me and at least in part I was its

source. Marthe, meanwhile, went on with her exercise. She was occupied with the task of keeping countenance and her position at the piano was of help. The elder girl spoke dryly:

"If you have no objection, Marthe, I should like to play too . . . when it is my turn."

Marthe said nothing: she got up: and like a child who has been unjustly punished she marched straight from the room.

Was the same scene going to start afresh? The notion did not appeal to me at all. My enthusiasm for confession had suddenly run out. I know already what she'll say, the turn she'll give to the story. Really, these lessons are getting to be a bit too much!

Cécile followed her sister's disappearance with a disdain that held a tinge of pity. Then, turning to me: "I am sorry to have been late. I had a headache. But I've taken another tablet and I'm quite ready to work."

And indeed, she played quite as usual, perhaps even a bit less rigidly, and with fewer false notes. She was very pale; the firm modeling of her flesh gave to her skin a sort of marbled glow which did not seem the dull complexion of Cécile. Her face was ironical and aloof. She aroused me more, troubled me more deeply than all the tears of Marthe. I could arrive at no equilibrium with this girl, achieve no sense of her place and of mine, of the relation between us.

She must have been aware of my mood in some degree, and this must have influenced her own. But I had no sense of being able to act easily upon her. I did not ask myself, as I had done with Marthe: How long will she hold out? At once, a thought came to haunt me. I recalled her threat to her sister to do away with herself. Could this false calm be the mask of a quiet resolution? Despair that shows itself is easy enough to cope with. But if my suspicions are true, I have no right to make believe that I know nothing, that I suspect nothing. I cannot hope for a candid explanation: I dare not ask it, and even if I did she would probably refuse. I must contrive to find words, innocent and indifferent enough in seeming, words so freighted with power and suggestion that they will reach and extinguish her hidden will to die.

I could not find them. Meantime, a certain artifice in Cécile's

manner weighed on me more and more. There I was rounding out my phrases, controlling the intonations of my voice as I explained some trivial detail of the exercise. And tiring! Before an audience, there may be pleasure in "fine talk." But here in the Barbelenet *salon*, with the dark Cécile seated at my left, the portrait of the uncle overhead, and the subdued and morose reflections of light to and fro between the piano and the brass polished jardinière, "fine talk" was a depressing effort, it was like working a pump in a deep cellar. . . .

The weight of the Barbelenet house was upon me, and I felt it. It was getting to be a distinct effort, just to stay there. All my initial work in getting used to the place had availed nothing. And yet I had grown accustomed to many things in this household. What now made it all suddenly unbearable and strange?

Toward the close of the lesson, Cécile said:

"Would you mind very much meeting M Pierre Febvre again, next Tuesday? He is coming."

"Why no! Not at all," I answered. And I showed how much her question had surprised me. Cécile was watching me, as she asked her question. Now once more she turned to the piano. Very faintly, she smiled. And yet her smile was neither wilful nor mysterious enough to make me feel that it concealed a sarcasm or a challenge.

I was pondering it still, many hours after. . . .

VIII

Nothing remarkable at first about this meeting. The girls were alone when I came in. M Pierre Febvre had lunched there and was on a tour of the shops with M Barbelenet. Doubtless Mme Barbelenet was resting in her room on the first floor or on the couch in the dining-room beyond those double doors which I had not yet crossed. I started the lesson quite as usual. Between the sisters and me there was a calm pregnant with intimations. Cécile and Marthe were aloofly courteous to each other like the girls in those swagger boarding schools where even the most intimate friends refrain from calling each other by the more personal pronoun. But both of them had the air of sharing a secret with me.

If Cécile said to Marthe: "I am three measures beyond B," her tone meant: "Of course it must be I who am wrong, Marthe is always right. If by some miracle I did manage ever to play faultlessly, luck would have it that just then perfection was out of place." But the warmth of her eyes, the furrow on her brow, rather more an inevitable something in her mood, conveyed to me this thought: "What possible value can the third measure beyond B have for one who is going to die?" . . . Yes, it was she who brought the thought back to me, freshened it silently as if it were our secret understanding. From her body, both vibrant and dark, this thought came to me. And on the other hand, it was Marthe whose manner alluded to my meeting with Pierre Febvre, it was she who searched me, and was a bit astonished, as if she were uncertain whether to be confident or suspicious.

In the pause after a piece, we heard a sigh in the dining-room. It was as if the sigh had been there long, only the piano had hidden it. Faint though it was, this lamentation unnerved me. The smoke-hued double door took on from it a mournful omen, seemed to swell visibly with its life. Marthe got up; her face was a little girl's as she hurried out to her mother. Cécile got up also, but stayed near the piano. Slowly, Marthe came back, shutting the door behind her.

"It's nothing, Mama says for Eugénie not to bother now about those new pills. She wants me to help—in there. You will excuse me, *Mademoiselle*? I have to go to the kitchen to see about the tea. You'll not be able to work here, I am afraid: we'll be disturbing you, Eugénie and I."

Mme Barbelenet appeared after the tea things were laid. I searched for a sign of that sigh on her face, on her lips: there was none. The queenly countenance of Mme Barbelenet admitted that suffering had its place in human life as a sort of test for superior souls: but the thought was general, it had no bearing on any particular or recent thing. I could not even make out if Mme Barbelenet was aware of the rivalry of her daughters, of its extremely serious extent: or whether she had given in to the failure of her first plan and was hatching another. Her casual glances at the girls did not suggest that she was studying them. It was as if she had no thought beyond a maternal scrutiny of their dresses, or of their table manners.

At last M Barbelenet and M Pierre Febvre came in. It was the same group as last time. But I found it hard to realize this sameness. To begin with my place in it was altogether changed. Not that I had sunk so deep into the Barbelenet world as to be a part of it: the thought would have dismayed me. But all the feelings, schemes, currents of will that played at the centre of the family group had now their vortex dangerously near my person: the gyrations grazed me.

With the first look at M Pierre Febvre, I was once more deep in the ruminant scrutiny which last time Madame Barbelenet had broken. The process started up at the precise point where it had stopped . . . like a strip of lace in a machine once more set running, or like one of those dreams which go on night after night.

—Cheap actor? . . . Servant? . . . If I saw him for the first time in a train, what in him, what feature, would keep me from taking him for a valet on a holiday? Yes, that is easy. That gleam in his eye is neither servile nor insolent: nor yet the challenge of a pride that suffers from position. The lines of his face come and go freely as his mood prompts, or his choice of response to the conventions. There he is laughing. His face was childlike for a moment in its lack of restraint. There was no mask on that spontaneous gaiety. Actor? . . . Not that, either. . . .

There was this difference. My interior monologue did not draw me away from my surroundings. It ran on, almost underground, like a minor theme played by the left hand at the piano. It made a counterpoint to my spoken words, and to my more social thoughts.

I had a chance this time to talk with Pierre Febvre. We discussed music. He claimed never to have learned to play the piano. Perhaps he was sincere in the sense that he had never seriously studied . . . merely picked up sight reading and the like. But he showed that he knew a good deal about music. He struck a few notes on the piano in order to recall certain passages and I had a clear picture: a cabin on a ship, officers grouped smoking, and Pierre Febvre at the piano . . . a handful of young men haunted by the sea's solitude and stirred by the long swells of memory. Pierre Febvre among them and the music exalting their mood into a painful joy. . . . My head whirled a little as we chatted on. It was so long since I had had a good talk (and in the presence of others). Marie Lemiez could not sustain a con-

versation on any difficult subject; and besides what we two said to each other had no judges beyond ourselves.

The judges here were scarcely formidable. And yet their presence intensified our pleasure. Suddenly we two, Pierre Febvre and I, were one within a subtle understanding; we were an illumined city and the rustic peoples crowded about and gaped from afar at the mysterious rites. Perhaps Pierre Febvre did not have the thought as articulate as I, but its meaning touched him. It was long past the usual hour . . . time to go. But I had to will my going several times, repeat the order twenty times at least, before I finally got to my feet and found the proper words for parting.

Madame Barbelenet said to her husband: "You will accompany *Mademoiselle*?" But her words were almost cut off by Pierre Febvre.

"Why, I'm going up to town, too. If *Mademoiselle* will let me, I'll be glad to help her across the tracks."

So emphatic was his invitation that there was no time either to oppose it or consider it. Madame Barbelenet was about to remind her cousin that he was expected to dinner. But all she managed to do was to get up and open her left hand and give a little gasp.

As to the girls, I took good care not to look their way.

There we were suddenly past the threshold, M Pierre Febvre and I.

The same impulse that had brought us together an hour before, and that had inspired Pierre Febvre's hasty invitation, now made me say: "It is really not right that I should be taking you from your fiancée."

We had reached the first tracks. He exclaimed: "You'll have me run over, if you shock me like that! My fiancée . . . why . . ." And he burst into a "Ha! Ha! Ha!" . . . a kind of exclamation, very gay and very virile, less corporeal than laughter, really a pure delighted burst of intelligence, a hint of all sorts of jolly ways of taking life. I could hear that "Ha! Ha! Ha!" resounding in the corridor of the ship, on the bridge, at the peak of a steel stairway. A single glance of a being may seem to us inexhaustible, may win a sudden shattering dominion over the will. This "Ha! Ha! Ha!" gave me a strange trust in myself and in all things, armoured me audaciously in my

approach to the whole human scene. It was like a heady wine. My flesh drank it in. I envied the man who carried such ebullience in himself. I felt that I was going to want to hear that "Ha! Ha! Ha!" again.

A few tracks further on: "Who told you I was engaged to . . . well, first of all to *whom?*"

"Please excuse me. I'm afraid I've said something very foolish. There were hints, bits of secrets which I fear I heard carelessly, and understood all wrong. I am so sorry."

"Please, no excuses. I assure you I am delighted with the chance to find out certain things for myself, which after all do concern me. Look here! You have acted like a friend, which was splendid. Now don't go and act like a diplomat!"

"But what can I tell you that you don't know far better than I?"

"Pardon me. I am convinced that you can tell me a whole host of things. Haven't you just informed me that I am engaged? Is that nothing?"

There was room here, I thought, for a new "Ha! Ha! Ha!" but it did not come. And then, ere I could be disappointed, I understood that so lyrical an outburst should never come when one expected it. It would turn mechanical. Its magic depended on its shock.

"Come, please tell me the rest. What is the date of my wedding? I really should know that, you see, in order to be there."

"You're making fun of me, and I suppose I deserve it. What have I meddled in? But surely, you understand, if I've made this mistake, the least I can do now is to beg your pardon and keep quiet about how it happened. If one of us is in a position to correct the other, it certainly is not I."

He smiled and grimaced a bit. The lamp of the semaphore shone strangely on his smiling. "There's something in that. I am the defendant, I suppose. Yes: it's all quite as it should be. . . . The hour of expiation. . . . You are wholly in your rights when you ask me how it is that I should appear as the fiancé of . . . by Jove, of whom? . . . well, of one of the Barbelenet sisters: let's put it the fiancé of the Barbelenet sisters." He spoke so lightly and his gaiety chimed so deliciously with my thoughts, that I could not help laughing. "It is up to me to defend myself," he went on. "Right! Explain myself. . . ."

I protested.

"Yes, I must. But you'll help me? It's the least you can do. Certain elements in this affair are beyond me. That's where you can serve."

We were leaving the station. Before us lay the Square. Suddenly he stopped and his voice showed that he was vexed.

"Here I was, about to lead you quite innocently into town. You'll probably prefer not to be seen alone with a man whose years are not yet exactly canonical. We're in the provinces, remember, and your situation . . . I understand perfectly. I was about to act like a fool—once again. Why don't you say something? Perhaps it's still more foolish for me to be perorating here in the full magnificent view of the electric lamp."

"Heavens! it didn't occur to me, any more than to you. It's true. If the mother of one of my pupils saw us on the Avenue de la Gare, which is rather empty at this time, she'd not put herself out to think up a charitable excuse."

His black eyes sparkled. He looked at me as one looks at a friend who has insinuated a good joke.

"This is a bother! And yet I can't let you go without an explanation. I insist! We can't go back over the tracks, either."

I was strangely held. To me also it seemed important that our talk should still go on. I say "to me also" for I was certain of the same almost anxious wish beneath the banter of Pierre Febvre. Cost what it might, we must remain together. In half an hour, perhaps, we could part, and our parting would be right. I was in the mood almost of waiting for the end of a most delicate experiment: one in which luck and the circumstance of things played quite as great a *rôle* as my own skill, so that I had to keep my hands off lest I cheat my purpose. "Were you going into town?" I asked him.

"Yes, I have some purchases to make. Most of the shops of F——les-Eaux are closed at this time of the year. You can't find a thing."

"Then, let's go this way. I know the street. It's a bit longer than by the Avenue de la Gare. But there's small chance of meeting any one."

The street lay in dark shadows: we went in.

"You know," he said, "I am a sailor. . . . I belong to the Merchant Marine. The last time over, at the Azores, I came

down with the influenza. All sorts of trouble followed . . . anaemia, liver. . . . The Company physician, a good sort, gave me six months' leave. I was rather glad. I'd been on the go a long time. The fleet had grown, they were short of men, and we were all a little overworked. I couldn't loaf at Marseille. That would look bad. So the doctor formalized my absence by sending me here, that is to F——les-Eaux. Pure chance! I had been boring myself there for two or three weeks when suddenly I remembered that there were relatives in the vicinity. The Barbelenets are cousins on my mother's side: I'm not sure if they're twice or thrice removed. My mind must have been confoundedly empty for them to enter it at all: I must have been really starving for recreation to have thought of paying them a visit. For I assure you, I live in mortal terror of *bourgeois* circles and *bourgeois* customs. It's my own family, see? My disgust for it all comes straight up from childhood, and I think that explains more than a little why I went to sea. I didn't even know the Barbelenets' address, but I recalled that the old man held an important position at the Station. I must tell you, that I find it very hard to live any length of time without a seaport or a metropolis at hand. This town does not exactly fit my needs. But a great Depot with its maze of workshops . . . it's beautiful, isn't it, all those rotundas, all those rails . . . a great Depot is better than nothing. I think it was that, that brought me here, a pretext for wandering about the platforms and the yards looking for Cousin Barbelenet. It's a little like the Arenc and Joliette basins at Marseille, don't you think? Or perhaps that is only an illusion, an excuse occurring to me now. At all events, I looked for my cousin and I found him. And I found his house. His house, I admit, his house amused me immensely. In Marseille, there's a sort of platform at the docks, where a number of quays cross; and here you'll find a tiny bar, lodged away in a perfect gem of a house. An old codger with a beard pours you Old Manada at ten of a sunny morning, and the riveters racket away on the nearby hulls. Well, the Barbelenet house is not as jolly as that, not by a long shot . . . but it has its charm. I admit I'd like it even better if it had a bit of a bar for the tracklayers and the firemen, and if there were an old lady—Madame Barbelenet might serve if you rubbed off some of her polish—to pour you an Old Manada. But we must manage with what there is.

"I know what you're thinking . . . all this beating about the bush, and no word about the heart of the matter. Yes. The heart of the matter? Where does it lie, after all? What I am saying may sound circumstantial and deliberate. Too innocent to be quite the whole truth, eh? 'Penetrating' persons, when one tells them a yarn like this, look at one with a smile of . . . penetration. But perhaps even they can go wrong. . . .

"To be sure, there were two girls in the house. I don't pretend that I was sorry—or indifferent. If I tell you that I like the company of ladies, I shall be telling you the absolute truth. Has my work something to do with this? Perhaps. But our situation in this regard is not in the least like that of the officers in the Navy. A ship of our sort is always well stocked with brilliant women and bright girls. There's plenty of chance to see them. This is particularly true of the purser. In our ears are poured all the troubles of the journey. We pass on complaints, on pleas for a change of cabin. In the evening, when we have caught up with our work, there's nothing to keep us from a round of the *salons*, from mixing in the conversation. In fact, it is a part of our duty. And there's not the least danger that our presence will be resented. You would never guess what humility can be treasured away in the breast of a society leader worth ten millions. The same person who would have the door shut on your face if you were so presumptuous as to visit her on land will be exquisitely cordial on board ship. You understand: for all the gilt hangings and the luxurious carpets and the inviting armchairs, there rises for ever from below ships a subtle tremor, and this tremor turns into sober little thoughts that hover always close and keep men's pride in a fragile state of flux.

"Of course, if one's not fatuous, one is only too well aware of the shallowness of such relations, and how far they fall short of true friendship. I don't romanticize them. For the most part, I find it pleasanter to smoke a cigar with some dull American who catechizes me about hotels in Florence, or wants to know if the Italians love their King. . . . Add to this, that these women are mostly foreign, and that a good part of their interest in talking with you is their ambition to brush up on French, and you'll understand that I am starved of true feminine society after all. But what of the Barbelenet girls? Excellent little provincial misses they are, and besides, my kin. There was no formality between

us. From the start I treated them as friends, and it never occurred to me to find out if they were used to such ways. The older girl is not exactly charming, certainly not pretty. The crass traditions of her family and of her world have left their deposit already on her soul. But she has spirit! I am often tempted to tell her exciting things just to see that flare in her eyes, which she at once puts down . . . the signal of a daring and untamed nature. I could well imagine her living in the Sixteenth Century and given over to a gallant life of passion. Ha! Ha! Ha! Differences in sex make for clairvoyance, eh? Notice that I said Sixteenth Century. I said nothing of Madame de la Pompadour or the Du-Barry. The younger girl's a lot more seductive, and probably there's less to her. To begin with, it is a point of interest that in a house which resembles no other house in all the world, there should be a little girl like all the little girls of her age. Can't you see the seventeen pages of exclamation and antithesis which a romantic novelist would make of it? First, a description of the Barbelenet house and your teeth chattering already. Then, a picture of Madame Barbelenet transmogrified into a Devil's cook. Then: 'In these shadows trembled a star, in this cavern breathed a flower . . .' Admit there's something of all that. . . .

"So I don't deny that I enjoyed the companionship of these two girls. Call it boredom, lack of choice, what you like. The fact remains; and I came again and again. I was invited to dinner. And since this is to be a full confession, I must leave nothing out. Have you had dinner yet at the Barbelenet house? Well, the Barbelenet dinner is a binding, potent, somberly poetic thing. Dishes come to the table that seem overcooked, forgotten in the oven; sauces so black you are quite sure you will never get them down. The maid does not inspire confidence. She is more like a scrubwoman, a furniture duster, than a cook. She has none of the glow and roundness and serenity of your true *cuisinière*. But wait! The first taste puzzles you. It is good, and you begin to wonder if you are taking a perverse pleasure in the massacre of your palate. The doubt does not last: a glass of the wine M Barbelenet has served you with his own hands, and it is gone. You realize that you are at the beginning of a repast of the very first rank: one that calls for all your critical attention. This cuisine may not be subtle, but it is profound! The dishes are the usual sort: family mutttons, family chickens. But you

find yourself admitting: 'I have never eaten leg of mutton before! I never guessed what roast chicken could be!'. . . There steals over you, over the house, over the persons in the house, a gastronomic glow. You watch the servant as she places a platter on the table, how she envelops it and bundles it up in a last lingering maternal look. You see the row of druggist boxes at the plate of Madame Barbelenet, and on the plate itself a thick round portion cut from the very heart of the joint, and in her glass the copious gleam of rich old Burgundy. Cécile is always rather saturnine, and Marthe keeps that pout of a worried child, which you know so well. But listen to Cécile as she tells her father with a dry twist of her lip in his direction, that the fresh bottle has a taste of cork—and you had not detected it. Or watch Marthe compound pepper and mustard into a subtle and precise seasoning for her sirloin. Oh, I assure you, my partner at table on board ship is often an Ambassador's wife or the daughter of a millionaire, but I am exceedingly impressed all the same by the Mesdemoiselles Barbelenet. It's not to the likes of *them* that I would dare offer so generously some of our synthetic ship vintages, nor ask them to select a slice of our cold storage beef.

"I know what you are thinking: love came to me, as to others appetite, in eating! For I still seem to fight shy, don't I, of the main question, the one that has caused all this talk, and that has taken us all this way into town. Yes, I can be frank with you, without seeming to be the cynic. I am not one of those persons who think that love can be born between a man and woman only in mysterious, and fortunate ways, only after rare harmonious encounters. Not at all! It seems to me that when a man and a woman come together, the first natural event between them is love. I use the word advisedly. I don't mean animal impulse, I don't mean rudimentary passion. I mean *love*: the immediate interchange of an extremely complex feeling. Time does not count. At the instant of their first being together, the thing exists. In fact, it is time that usually spoils it all. For instance: when I come off the ship after a long crossing, I am extremely sensitive to everything about me. Marseille pricks me like a briar-bush. Every wheel on the pavement strikes its individual note. In the streets are countless men and women passing, overtaking, touching, crossing. Myriad common presences, myriad instantaneous contacts, myriad flares of love between a man and a woman. This street

on which I have alighted from my ship becomes an astounding maze of crackling sparks! The next day, I am already worn down to the land: which means that I see nothing, I go about as blindly as the next one.

"I believe truly that when a man and woman meet, their first moment together is a moment of love. But in most cases this cannot last. The space between them widens at once. They drift apart at a heartbreaking pace. This woman is already elsewhere. I was thinking of other things. There was just time to love her, not even time to see her, not even time to think of looking in the direction she has gone. Or else, other feelings rush up, protest. Thoughts of prudence, the conventions . . . all that sort of thing . . . make short shrift of the ecstasy.

"You think I exaggerate? Perhaps what I say is more generally true with men than with women. Or rather, men dare take note of such things in their hearts, whereas women . . . At any rate if you will accept this as my theory, you will understand that I need not play the hypocrite. I do not deny that there was born between these girls and me, at the very start, a sentiment like love. Had it been otherwise, I should have wondered. I say between the girls and me: it was no more Marthe than Cécile: and whatever it was had absolutely no importance, no practical importance. It led to absolutely nothing.

"I said that at times I am sensitive to what is going on. But irregularly. I have pitiful gaps when I fail to see things that are as clear as day. If I ever marry, this is going to prove disastrous! Ha! Ha! For instance, it was only the other day that I grew aware of the family net in which I was so gorgeously embroiled. I discovered that Cécile had made up her mind to marry me: and that from Madame Barbelenet's eyes there was coming the sort of glow that is supposed to ripen sons-in-law. My impulse was to take the next train back to Marseille, and make some friend swap berths with me on the first out-going liner. What held me back? Was it mere indolence? Reluctance to decide anything? Distaste for losing a month's leave? The Barbelenet dinners? No indeed. You'll say, the might of an unconscious love. No, again! Rather, the difficulty in slipping out like that without appearing an ass; the thought that the parents might suspect dreadful things, might regard me as a seducer who had run away after dishonouring their home. I could not be sure of Cécile. She might be the

sort—not exactly to confess to her disgrace in tears, she is not devilish enough for that—but at least to hint that matters had gone quite far. If I stayed on, in a few weeks I should be able to ward off this danger, I should have time to cure the whole lot of them of their mistake.

"I had the notion of turning cold toward the young girls, from that time on. I did not. Such an abrupt change would have made me out a man who sees a little late that he has overstepped the bounds, and who fears that he may have to pay the consequences. I went on as usual. In order to show the older girl that she was not my 'heart's desire,' and to show them all that what interested me was youth itself, rather than any one person, I began to be on still easier terms with the younger sister. It was not a question of preference. I wanted my new manner to make them understand that Cécile was growing up, she was becoming a woman, she demanded a new kind of respect, and in this fact she lost what I had chiefly wanted. I harped more on the word 'cousins.' . . . You see? Something collective, something familiar. I could have patted the maid's cheek, hugged Madame Barbelenet in my new expansion. I did not quite go that far.

"Well, I'm beginning to suspect that my tactics have not been amazingly successful. Good craftsmanship in any line takes experience. I am afraid these subtleties simply did not get over—or worse."

"I suppose that's why you left just now, as you did . . . making a show of going out with me."

"What do you mean?"

"A sort of public demonstration of your independence."

"You know, that's punishing me with interest. What shall I say? I could answer you . . . or rather I might have answered you in a very curt and feeling denial. But what I've told you of my theories puts me in a painful position. I feel rather foolish. I am sorry, more deeply sorry than I have any right to tell you. Please don't expect me to protest."

"You are excused."

I said these words after a silence. My head was bent low, my eyes took in the last gleam of the sun lengthening before us and my voice was suffused tremblingly, as if these trivial words had had some solemn mastering sense. Did he notice this? Was

this why I was embarrassed? Howsoever, he gave the talk a light turn and it was at once easier to breathe.

"You have been patient listening to me. It was good of you, but I am still not satisfied. You promised to help! You have my version of the story now: you must know the girls' side, more or less. Who could help me so well? I want to ask some questions. All you need do is answer them. . . . You said 'your fiancée.' Of which of the girls were you thinking?"

"Why . . . I suppose of Cécile."

"You suppose? I see. Was it she put that in your head?"

"Not exactly. I am afraid I spoke rashly. I must have misunderstood a number of things that were told me quite by the way. I was struck by the word 'engaged': I could not have made that up. But I must have been muddled about its application. Any way, I was stupid to repeat it."

"I understand. You do not wish to betray the confidences of these two girls. It is splendid of you. But can't you see that in helping me you will be helping them? If these good people are going on to delude themselves about me, I'd best know it."

"Very well. I will speak frankly. I think your strategy has miscarried. In your effort to undeceive the older girl, you have . . . how shall I put it. . . .?"

"Deceived the younger one?"

"The word's not right. You transferred the ailment from the one to the other."

"The devil!"

"Even worse. For the elder one's not cured. The false hopes have changed place, that's all. But Cécile has no idea that she builds on absolutely nothing. She simply accuses her sister of treachery . . . and you of faithlessness."

"And you do not find this shocking? A true sailor's adventure. Chance lands you on a savage coast. You make friends with the natives. They welcome you hospitably. You barter glass beads for mutton. But you don't understand their customs. You scratch your ear with your little finger, and thunder! by their laws, that act has a dire magical meaning. You are caught. It's perfectly true that I came of the provincial *bourgeoisie*. But such a long time ago! I have forgotten a good deal. When I was still part of it, I was of an age at which a boy could play with a couple of girl

cousins without frightful consequences. What would you do if you were I?"

"First of all, I'd be absolutely sure that I was not in love with one of those . . . girl cousins."

"Oh, I see what you are coming to. Excellent thing, psychology. 'Yes, *Monsieur*, your consciousness tells you that you have only a most casual affection for Cécile Barbelenet. Even, at times, you think that you despise her. Rationalization! The truth is, *Monsieur*, you are desperately in love.' I'm sorry . . . but it isn't so. Truly sorry, for these bizarre theories appeal to me."

"Next I would ask myself if the freedom of choice still remains with me. I mean . . . if I have not committed myself to one of these two girls."

"Committed myself? Why this is dreadful! Cold water is dripping down my back. You think that, do you? Either I am a monster, or the customs of these people are monstrous. You have no idea how it troubles me, that you should have such a thought."

"But I think nothing about it . . . at least I judge nothing. All I am doing is to raise the question."

"Yes: and why should I not be able to answer it directly? Why, the question itself is enough to freeze me. If I found it merely absurd, I could ignore it. I can't. I have to admit that there's some sense to it. What frightens me is that my conscience may yet give me over to these people. You see? I have scratched my ear with my little finger. It's bad enough that the irreparable gesture should raise up the whole tribe. But if I start suggesting to myself that in scratching an ear with a little finger I have indeed outraged some magical Order, and that I deserve to be sacrificed . . . why then!"

I was laughing.

"Besides, *Mademoiselle*, I was complacent enough to count on your being on my side, which would have helped my conscience enormously to hold out against these attacks of suggestion. But now, you too . . . You see, what I need is an expert's advice: some one who can say to me with authority, 'The local law being thus and so, you must do thus and so. Here are the precedents.' With that, I could win back a little confidence in myself. Alone, I dare decide nothing. It's true, it does seem to me that I've said nothing, done nothing, of the slightest importance, nothing that

could possibly commit me. But it is my common sense which suggested that, my common sense that knows so little about the local customs, and yet inspires me with a dangerous respect for the feelings of people. Man is superstitious. Nothing is so contagious as the notion of magic."

"I was wrong, perhaps, to worry you so. Well, it's only right that you should know how your cousins are taking things. Perhaps it is not too late to bring them back to reason. How to go about it—I haven't the least idea."

We had made more than one *détour*, quite instinctively, in order to let our talk go on. But the town was not infinite. It took a certain collusion even, not to notice that we had twice passed a little grocer's shop where one round lamp lighted the jars and bottles so naïvely that the thought came to me, sharp and delicious, of my childhood, and of Christmas stockings. Suddenly we were upon the rue Saint Blaise where it meets the rue de l'Huile. We had come up from the alley of *Devant-de-la-Boucherie*, which I had failed to recognize, and as we stepped from its gloom, the lighted street blazed in our eyes.

There we were, caught in the very heart of town, and still in the heart of our talk. I am afraid rather dumbly, we stopped in the Square and searched for some manner of farewell that would appear casual to others and to us. Embarrassment and amusement held us balanced. . . . Suddenly, there was Cécile Barbelenet not two paces off!

It was she, no doubt, Cécile, the elder daughter of the smoky house: Cécile the darkling body. She seemed to rise not from the street, but from our thoughts. And even here in the street's brilliance, she made a sort of sucking gap, even as in her house: a gap from which the town's bright movement fell away, deadened: a sort of flaw in the street.

She nodded to us, and passed. I had no time to see the expression of her face: or rather I did not try to see it. I did not try to see where she was going.

We went on a few steps. Pierre Febvre's mouth was open: he looked like a little boy caught at some mischief. But the way he raised his brow and puckered up his eyes showed charmingly that he understood the strangeness of the event; on the whole it amused him more than it disturbed him. Meanwhile, no word: but we were thinking. My sensation was at once serious and

delicious. I knew very well that this was unfortunate: I could foretell the possible consequences, I could even exaggerate them. I did not quite manage to be depressed.

At last Pierre Febvre, catching sight of the street placard, said:

"The Encounters of the rue Saint Blaise, or The Futile Precautions . . . You'll admit that this was not natural. Have you ever seen that girl before in this neighbourhood, at this hour?"

"Never."

"It's at least seven o'clock. The Mesdemoiselles Barbelenet are not the kind who are sent on errands at seven of the evening. Here's something to think about. Meanwhile, I admit my peculiar talent for getting caught. You must be furious at me!"

He stopped and pondered: a flood of little smiles went rippling round his face as if his eyes were their source.

"Listen!" he went on, "I've made such a good start at promising you . . . as they put it . . . I had better go on. A mistake is often a premature truth. I suggest that we dine together at a little table in the most conspicuous restaurant in town."

"You're joking."

"I am not! This time, I know what I am saying, what I am doing."

"Well, then—no."

"No?"

"No! This will bear thinking about, also."

"Oh, you want to think it over before you accept?"

"Certainly not. What I mean is that such an invitation would bear thinking about a little more . . . on the part of him who makes it. I can see that you enjoy the companionship of girls. It's too bad they can't take things as lightly as you do."

"Lightly? Excuse me. Think what you like of my conduct in the Barbelenet house. I admit anything. But I promise you that at this moment I am serious—serious, decisively! You may say that the difference is not discernible. You know, on board ship, we would say: 'There's fire in the hold' in quite the same calm tone of voice as 'The First Class complain about the fish.' Would the first announcement be a small matter on that account, would it not . . ."

"Good-bye, Monsieur Febvre. Many thanks for accompanying me. . . ."

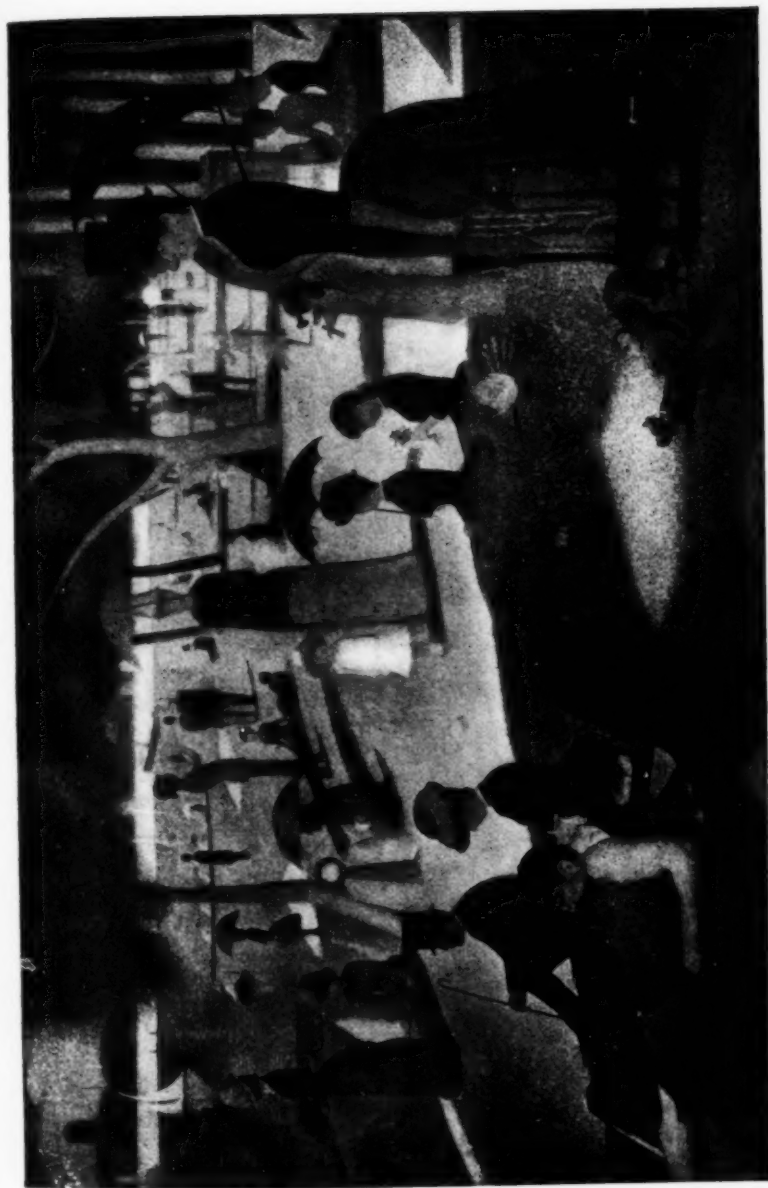
To be continued



Photograph by Druet

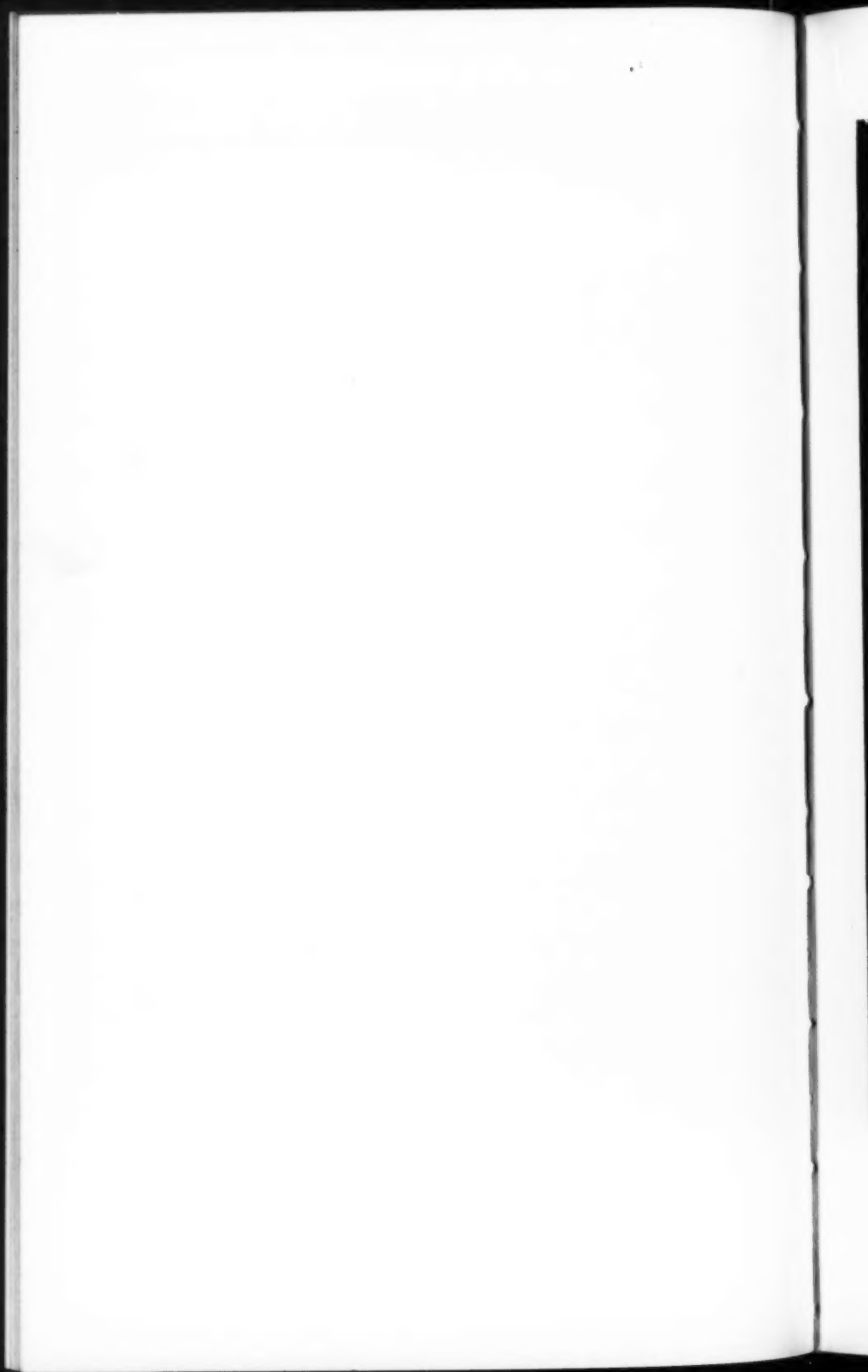
LES BORDS DE LA SEINE. BY GEORGES SEURAT

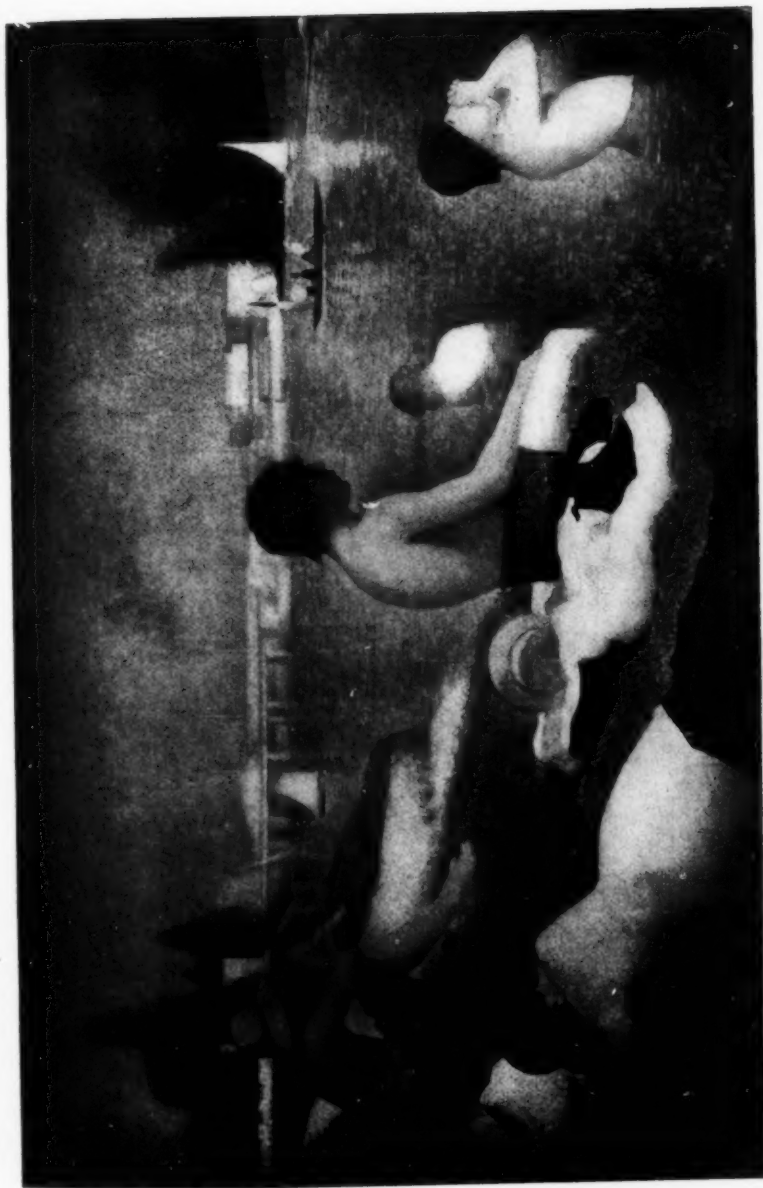




Photograph by Druet

UN DIMANCHE A LA GRANDE JATTE. BY GEORGES SEURAT





Photograph by Druet

LA BAIGNADE. BY GEORGES SEURAT

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PARIS LETTER

July, 1924

FOLLOWING closely upon the homage paid Proust by Anglo-Saxon writers (Marcel Proust, an English Tribute, edited by C. K. Scott Moncrieff—a touching foreign commemoration, forming a worthy complement to the special number devoted to him last year by *La Nouvelle Revue Française*) comes Proust's new volume, *La Prisonnière*, constituting the third part of *Sodome et Gomorrhe* and the sequel to *A la Recherche du Temps Perdu*. Many books are read, it would seem, abstractedly; we remember the books, but not the place, circumstance, or state of mind in which we read them. Proust, on the contrary, puts all our sluggish senses on the alert, cleanses them, sharpens them, animates them with a genius that is not our own, inasmuch as it is that of the author; we are become like Proust, for whom a word, an odour, was enough to give birth to a thousand thoughts, ten thousand memories. I had with me during these last days in a little hotel on the banks of the Seine in Les Andelys above Rouen, the two volumes of *La Prisonnière*. Henceforward the image of Albertine, captured by the hero and confined in his apartment, a close prisoner to his distrustful love and a victim to the vivisection of his jealousy, is not to be separated in my mind from a stately landscape of chalk cliffs abrupt over a slate-blue Seine still ruffled by winter currents, and unmindful of the Parisian scenes it reflected a few hours before, going down to the sea on an exquisite afternoon of early spring, through the fat Normandy meadows and the delicately toned hills (that enchanted Turner, Boudin, and Sickert, and later delighted Elstiz and Proust himself) skirting the villages or hamlets of Balbec, Cambremer, Froberville, et cetera—that Proust particularly loved and used in the naming of his characters. Of *La Prisonnière* there is nothing to say if not that it and *Swann* are the most beautiful of Proust's books. Pages like those on Albertine asleep, watched over by her calm, tender, and implacable lover, the death of Bergotte, the falling out of M de Charlus with the Verdurins, the Verdurin soirées, the passages on Hardy and Dostoevsky, and,

above all, the principal theme of love-jealousy, the psychological orchestration of the great dolorous symphony of suspicion—suspicion carried here to a diabolic intensity beside which the story of Swann's jealousy in the first volume grows almost pale—will add more glory to the name of this, my best friend, whose every volume, as it brings back his vivid personality, renews my inconsolable grief at having lost him. But have I lost him? When I read his books I cannot believe it.

The exposition of the collected work of J. E. Blanche, now being held in the Faubourg Saint Honoré, is also in its way a vast research, sentimental as well as plastic, into the land of lost days. In his preface to Blanche's book of essays, entitled *De David à Degas*, Marcel Proust tells of the astonishment of a *mondaine* "that masterpieces could be created by the hands of so well-dressed a man, so keen and malicious a conversationalist." Save the hundred or so of his canvases at the museum of Rouen and those which are not in France (the Thomas Hardy of the Tate Gallery, and the Beardsley of the National Gallery of London) forty years of the painting of Blanche—and more than an occasional masterpiece—are here. By means of a nice selection of subjects the artist has ably builded a veritable iconography of an entire epoch, or rather of at least three epochs, from 1880 to our own days. There is, first, the Whistler epoch with portraits of Maurice Barrès, Gide, Proust, Montesquiou. Then a second period with its reminiscences of Hogarth, Chardin, or Stevens; dead landscapes; delicate poems of lacquer, flowers, and mother-of-pearl; "Coster girls"; portraits of Debussy, George Moore, Degas, Rodin, et cetera. Next, the more recent days of the Russian ballets; Nijinsky, Prince Igor, and the war pictures. These I do not like so well. Finally, there are the portraits of to-day: Bergson, Claudel, Giraudoux, Max Jacob, Radiguet, Cocteau, Mauriac, and myself. Aside from its artistic interest, the future documentary value of such a collection is incalculable. "How we should prize," remarks J. L. Vaudoyer in his excellent preface, "a gallery of portraits of the eighteenth century; the likenesses of Voltaire and Diderot, Gluck and Laclos, faithfully done by a single painter, a reproduction of an entire epoch with its cafés, its salons, its *femmes d'esprit*, its adventures and actors!" Blanche is at home in any field of artistic effort, however audacious, and has faithful admirers in England and America. Because he

has bided his time (he is over sixty and this is his first exhibition) and because of his rare gifts, his keen intelligence and technique, he is finally being accorded a well-deserved place in the French art of the last thirty years.

As I am just now speaking of painting, I want to say a word about a new painter who has been much discussed in Paris for some weeks. At the Boeuf sur le Toit or at the Jockey the first words one hears are always: "You know Picasso has just discovered a new painter. He is twenty years old; he comes from Barcelona; his name is Pruna." Pruna is at one and the same time Luini and the very last phase of Picasso; but he is himself too and always will be. He has his own definite qualities of composition: a naïf grace, a deft handling of forms, and the introduction of variations into landscapes, figures, or the eyes of American sailors. You do not know the Jockey? It is no more the Jockey Club than the Wagram ball of which Proust speaks in his preface to Blanche's book is a ball at the Prince of Wagram's. The Wagram ball is a public dance of the Avenue Wagram and the Jockey is an American cabaret in Montparnasse, the first of its kind in Paris and one of the strongholds of artists of the advance guard. The Rotonde itself is being eclipsed. Imagine a single room, papered walls and ceiling—with screaming posters, insolent programmes of cacophonous concerts, urgent summons to wild exhibitions, and comic recommendations or injunctions in the Yankee slang of New York's Bohemia, as for example, "Take care of your coat if you have any," et cetera. In this room, blue as a tunnel with stagnant smoke, naïve girls dance with the directors of musical reviews. The costumes range from the heroic student's cape, lined with red silk, of the time of Barrès or Jean de Tinan and the cravats of the Yellow Book days to the now prevailing vogue of winter sports clothes much affected toward midnight by painters—no one knows why. The pianist plays a descending scale as though it were a bobsleigh slide. The favourite singer, for whose sake certain *femmes du monde* cross the Seine, is a taxi chauffeur during the afternoon. He is of Polish origin. One of my friends who is infatuated with him met him the other afternoon on the boulevards. She beckoned and the chauffeur recognized her and stopped. As they had been dancing together all night, a quarter of an hour's conversation seemed the natural thing. Finally she took her leave. "Eight francs seventy-

five, *Madame*," said the chauffeur; for he had lowered his flag for the period of the interview.

La Nouvelle Revue Française publishes in its February number an article by M Marcel Arland, in which that gifted young writer of twenty-three sits in judgement upon the generations that preceded him. M Rivière presents the article in the light of a conclusive document. But is it? M Arland's confession seems to me confused, romantic, and aimless.

Since the breaking up of Dada, the growths that composed it may plainly be seen taking individual root in a soil common to them all. There is general agreement to-day that Tzara is a charming poet, Soupault a charming novelist, Picabia a charming blasphemer; and that Aragon will have every success. The only case that is novel and of import seems to me that of André Breton, an out and out extremist, making no concessions and turning his back upon literature and all the world. His *Clair de Terre* just published, a strange, hermetic book full of talent and frenzy, has been one of his few signs of life. I like Breton's personality.

While the serpents of Lautréamont writhe and threaten to devour the best of our post-war youth, Jean Giraudoux, a charming Debussy muezzin, mounts his minaret to say his *Prière sur la Tour Eiffel*, a prayer replete with optimism and with deference toward higher education. François Mauriac, in *Genitrix*, has taken refuge in the Landes near the Spanish border, thereby sheltering his stark and honest art against the invasion of passing fashions and modern crises. *Le Paradis à l'Ombre des Epées* is an exposition of Henry de Montherlant's thesis that athletics constitute a mystic rite, a sort of religious and military training that he considers Spartan, but that seems to me rather Germanic, in view of the aristocratic basis of his programme. It is an interesting document nevertheless. I am not well enough acquainted with young French athletes to know whether they are all as Montherlant paints them. If so they have gone far indeed since the days when the most disinterested and Anglo-Saxon spirit ruled athletics in France.

Bernard Grasset has just re-edited under the title *L'Homme de Cour*, the curious book of Balthazar Gracian, a Spanish Jesuit. It had an immense vogue in the eighteenth century, and was then during the nineteenth totally forgotten, save by Schopenhauer, upon whom it is said to have exercised a decisive influence. I was much

interested in this series of maxims moral and immoral, on the achieving of success through cynicism, by a practice of the art of biding one's time, and the use of cunning to curry favour with the great.

It is not often that I have space or time to speak of the French magazines of the advance guard. There are about a score of them and, especially since the extension of the custom of issuing special numbers, they often publish important manifestos. Those who desire precise and detailed information on our contemporary letters must not miss the special number of *Intentions* devoted to Valéry Larbaud; that of *La Nouvelle Revue Critique* on Maurice Barrès; *Le Disque Vert* (which together with *Ça Ira*, *Selection*, and *La Nervie*, forms an important group of Belgian magazines in the French tongue) on Max Jacob; the *Images de Paris* on Apollinaire; the Poet Nicolas Beauduin in *Vie des Lettres* on the present state of letters; and *Intentions* or *l'Ane d'Or* on modern Spanish literature.

In contrast to the general impoverishment of the modern French theatre, has been the signal success of Jules Romain's *Knock ou le Triomphe de la Médecine* at the Théâtre des Champs Elysées, a success in part prepared for by the reception of his *M Le Trouhadec Saisi par la Débauche* last year. It is an excellent satire on doctors. Though the humour is at times somewhat ponderously synthetic, it has succeeded in captivating a public ordinarily but little inclined to enjoy audacity. I have been amused too by the comic aspects of *La Dame aux Camélias* which, thanks to the exquisite Second Empire settings of Alex Benois, has been successfully adapted to modern taste by Melle Rubinstein. *La Dame aux Camélias* has not yet given the lie to its reputation as an old melodrama that after a half century still moves to tears the Chinese and the Esquimaux. *Le Tombeau sous l'Arc de Triomphe* by M de Raynal which has made such a sensation at the Comédie Française is a sinister war epic, full of rhetoric and vulgar eloquence. Then there is a short sketch, *Voulez-vous Jouer avec Moa*, with M Marcel Achard, a very young actor; it is characterized by a charming grace and novelty and is worthy of particular notice. As for the rest of the new plays, it is best not to mention them at all. Unfortunately, save for rare exceptions, it is only the least representative of French plays that are brought to the American stage for commercial purposes.

PAUL MORAND

BOOK REVIEWS

THE SEVEN LOW-BROW ARTS

THE SEVEN LIVELY ARTS. By Gilbert Seldes. Illustrated. 8vo. 448 pages. Harper and Brothers. \$4.

MR SELDES has written a valuable and enormously entertaining book on the vulgar arts of vaudeville, jazz music, newspaper satire, the movies, the revue, the circus, and the comic strip. He has tried to do for the field of popular entertainment very much what Mr Mencken has done for philology in his treatise on *The American Language*; and everyone interested in American culture should give attention to the results of his researches.

Unfortunately, Mr Seldes has not to the same degree as Mencken the gift of lucid presentation. He does not seem to realize that the chief function of his book is one of exposition, the conveying of information and the unfolding of ideas, and that exposition requires a certain amount of patience and order on the part of the writer. Instead, Mr Seldes proceeds obliquely by means of metaphysical discussions of theory and elliptical literary allusions, jokes, curses, cries of ecstasy, and hysterical revelations—the whole rather bewilderingly distributed among chapters, parentheses, foot-notes, and appendices. You have a feeling that the quicksilver ideas are escaping through the ill-woven interstices of the sentences. There are many passages in *The Seven Lively Arts* which I cannot understand at all, and many others which I should not be able to understand unless I happened in the particular case to have some independent knowledge of what Mr Seldes is trying to tell me about. I cite, for example, the foot-note on page 336:

"I haven't seen *The Covered Wagon*. Its theme returns to the legendary history of America. There is no reason why it should not have been highly imaginative. But I wonder whether the

thousands of prairie schooners one hears about are the film or the image. In the latter case there is no objection."

Now what does he mean by this? On the opposite page I find:

"By corrupting the action [of novels and plays which were being turned into movies] the producers changed the idea; bad enough in itself, they failed to understand what they were doing and supplied nothing to take the place of what they had destroyed."

I can see that a possible sense might be given to this passage by interchanging the semicolon with the comma, but there are so many other passages like it that it is impossible to tell whether this particular one has been misprinted or not. Again:

"You ['the movie magnates'] gave us Marguerite Clark in films no better than the 'whimsy-me' school of stage plays."

Now I happen to know what Mr Seldes means by the "whimsy-me" school of stage plays because I happened to be present on the single night when *No-Siree* was performed, and saw the burlesque of A. A. Milne in which the old gentleman said, "Ah, whimsy me!"; but there can't be more than a few hundred people in the country to whom this passage will convey anything at all. I commend Mr Seldes to the study of the expository writings of Bertrand Russell and J. S. Mill, and to the author of *Gulliver's Travels* and *The Conduct of the Allies*, whom Mr Seldes frequently invokes, but seems to have profited little by reading.

None the less, for all his tendency toward woolly writing, Mr Seldes does succeed in disengaging some judicious observations: the chapter from which I have just quoted, for example, contains admirable criticism of the movies; and the discussion of the technique of vaudeville is, I believe, equally sound. And, though his *bons mots* do not always quite come off, he strikes at his best a vein of debonair wit—as in his passage on Mr Christopher Morley—which seems to ignite spontaneously and unexpectedly, when he is not especially trying for it. But where he is really

most successful, I feel, is in simply reporting the things that he has seen. It is then that he writes his best prose and produces his most persuasive effects. The descriptions of the Chaplin films, the Krazy Kat comic strip, and the antics of the Fratellini really bring them most vividly before us: we laugh with delight as we read. Mr Seldes is surest here, I suppose, because he is closest to his object. As soon as he stops looking at his object he has a way of being bedazzled by strange fancies, and is almost as likely to say something wildly inappropriate as something penetrating and true. How, for example, did he arrive at the following: "It was odd that in *Vanity Fair's* notorious 'rankings,' Krazy tied with Doctor Johnson, to whom he owes much of his vocabulary." In what way does Krazy Kat's vocabulary resemble Doctor Johnson's? The romantic passages which Mr Seldes proceeds to quote certainly do not tend to convince one of it. He also describes Krazy Kat as "a creature more like Pan than any other creation of our time"—though it is difficult to see how Krazy is much more like Pan than he is like Doctor Johnson. And on what evidence does he prophesy that Ring Lardner is capable of becoming a second Mr Dooley? Ring Lardner, so far as I know, has never shown a taste for political satire; his recent tendency has been, on the one hand, toward sheer nonsense and, on the other, in such short stories as *The Golden Honeymoon*, a sort of realistic fiction. Nor can I see that the passage about the kittens which Mr Seldes quotes from Lardner has anything to do with the "Black Beauty—Beautiful Joe style of writing" of which Mr Seldes says it is a parody. "It may shock Mr Lardner," says Mr Seldes, "to know that he has here done in little what Mr Joyce has done on the grand scale in *Ulysses*." Well, the reviewer can testify that Mr Lardner is not the only person surprised by this statement. And he feels sure that Mr Lardner's shock will be nothing to the one in store for the composers of *I Wonder Who's Kissing Her Now* when they learn that they have "skilfully built up a sentimental situation in order to tear it down with two words." Not, however, that Mr Seldes doesn't often hit the mark—when he suggests, for example, that Mr Dooley, in respect to the Dreyfus case, was performing precisely the same service for Americans as Anatole France did for the French. The only difference was, as Mr Seldes notes, that a different sort of audience required a dif-

ferent vehicle of satire. What Mr Dooley had to say was essentially no more genial than what Anatole France had to say, but it was only his geniality and his dialect which made it possible for him to say it at all. So, in our own generation, when manners have passed from back-slapping to brutality, we have Mencken using a bludgeon on a society which understands nothing but bludgeons. We have never yet reached the day when an Anatole France could be useful or popular.

Much of the clouding of Mr Seldes' judgement in individual cases arises, I fancy, from his strangely feverish approach to his subject as a whole. In his most ecstatic moments he is given to making extravagant claims for his heroes—as when he asserts that Herriman and Charlie Chaplin are the only two "great artists" in America, and that Krazy Kat is our "most satisfactory work of art"; then, apparently with these excesses upon his conscience, he will protest for whole chapters at a time that he is not really trying to compare Herriman with Picasso and Irving Berlin with Strawinsky, but merely backing them against the "*faux bon*," the "bogus" imitations of the fine arts—thus creating, with an immense amount of pother, what is, so far as I can see, very largely an artificial issue, and one which lands Mr Seldes in a foolish and inaccurate disparagement of opera and the drama. Why can Mr Seldes not simply go ahead and write a book about the popular arts, without all these protestations? They have been written about before—by Anatole France, for example, who did not think it necessary to denigrate the theatre in order to justify the *café chantant*. Well, there is a real reason, I suppose, why the popular arts present a slightly more difficult problem in America than they do in a society like the French. The French have a culture which diffuses itself through all the classes and forms of their activity. The same thing which you have at its highest pitch of purity and intensity in a comedy of Molière is found also in a farce of Guitry, a revue of Rip, a cartoon in *Le Rire*, or a conversation in a railway coach. But in America we have no such homogeneous culture penetrating our society. We have a whole race that arrives at maturity with practically nothing that can be called genuine contact with the classic Anglo-American culture which is all we have for a heritage; and among this race it was inevitable that there should be individuals who, speaking no other language but the

common slang and obliged to turn their gifts to account in the practice of some slap-stick form of entertainment, have achieved extraordinary brilliance or distinction, not only unrecognized by serious criticism, but scarcely even knowing there was such a thing as art or realizing that they were artists. Herriman, I suppose, is such a man; so perhaps is Ring Lardner. And Mr Seldes has performed a feat of some daring in bringing them within the field of criticism. He has overdone it a little, to be sure, and his case may suffer in consequence; but I dare say if he had not been capable of overdoing it, he might never have got so far as to do it at all.

One thing which, I suspect, has had much to do with making Mr Seldes self-conscious about the popular arts is the fact that, unlike most Americans, he seems not to have been brought up on them from boyhood and to have learned early to take them for granted. He tells us, for example, that he had scarcely ever in his youth been to either a circus or a vaudeville show; and his failure to discuss either the early work of Oppen (save for a bare mention of Happy Hooligan) or the burlesque of Weber and Fields, suggests that he may never have known them. This has the advantage of enabling him to see in the vulgar arts things which escape people who have grown up with them, and the disadvantage of allowing him to approach them with a sensibility so sophisticated, that, not, for example, having enjoyed a given vaudeville act at the mental age for which it was intended—that is, the age that Mr Seldes was about twenty years ago and that the average vaudeville audience is for ever—he tends either angrily to throw it overboard as an unsuccessful attempt to do something dignified or to read into it all sorts of profundities which have no actual existence.

This lack of background in the lively arts allows him to neglect an interesting subject which I should like very much to see discussed: I mean the revolution in New York humour. In the old days, Lew Fields used to look at Joe Weber's flowered vest and say, "Aha, now I know vere de lounge vent!" Nowadays, Joe Cook says to "the Senator," "How's your uncle?"—and the Senator replies, "I haven't got an uncle." "Fine," says Cook, "How is he?" The difference is that Fields' joke is a gag, whereas Cook's is simply idiotic. Fields is fantastic, but there is a point in what he says; Cook is pointless and insane. I would bring to Mr Seldes' notice two comedians who seem to have been the transition figures in this change: Charlie Case and James J. Morton. Charlie Case

was a black-face monologist with a Chaplinesque overtone of pathos who used to sing curious unrhymed songs to a monotonous dirge-like accompaniment. Case had a distinguished and personal vein which was at its best when it was furthest from gagging, and his death is said to have been hastened by chagrin at his failure to establish himself with anything like the public he deserved. If he had been launched only eight or ten years ago he would now probably have a show of his own—like Frank Tinney who, to my mind, is far less interesting than Case. I should like to see Mr Seldes add Charlie Case's two celebrated songs to the appendix of his next edition; he can get them from F. P. A., who reprinted them at the time of Case's death. James J. Morton was a large solemn man in an ill-fitting frock-coat who used to come out and recite "Hark, mother! I hear the sound of footsteps in the village street," to the accompaniment of deafening off-stage noises, and tell interminable pointless stories rather in the manner of Ed Wynn. Both these men were wholly unlike any other comedians whom I ever remember to have seen in that era: the Jimmy Powerses, the Nat M. Willses, even the de Wolfe Hoppers. They were more personal, more intellectual, more like the comedians of to-day. In them one could feel the first faint foreshadowings of the Algonquin school of humour—the cult of the flat joke, the irrelevant remark, the sophisticated naïveté.

The thing that makes this new American school of humour particularly interesting is its curious resemblance to Dadaism. The English, and consequently the Americans, have always had a *penchant* for nonsense and, though the nonsense of Joe Cook and Robert Benchley is quite different from that of Carroll and Lear, there is nothing surprising about nonsense among us. But that the French should develop precisely the same thing at precisely the same moment looks like a case for a sociological critic. For the French have never been given to nonsense; they have scarcely even understood it. French jokes, unlike English jokes, are usually funny, not because they are silly, but because they are true. But since the war the French have discovered nonsense—Cocteau's *Mariés de la Tour Eiffel* was an approach to it, and the Dadaists have gone all the way; and though they have characteristically made an artistic issue of it, as Mr Benchley or Mr Lardner would not think of doing, they have arrived at precisely the same vein of idiocy as the American humorists. Another addition which I

should like to suggest to Mr Seldes for the appendix of subsequent editions of his work is the text of one of the Dadaist dramas printed side by side with, say, Mr Lardner's fishing scene from *The Forty-Niners* or the play of his which was read by Mr Benchley and Mr Stewart at the Authors' League Dinner. What this sort of thing represents in France, I suppose, is the collapse of Europe after the war and the intellectual chaos which accompanied it; what it represents in America is something which may perhaps be only another aspect of the same thing: the bewildering confusion of the modern city and the enfeeblement of the faculty of attention. People enjoy hearing long inconsecutive pointless stories told because that is the way their minds are beginning to work. They have to think about too many things and too many things whose relation to each other is not clear: when they sophisticate the humour of this state of mind they get Joe Cook and the Dadaists.

In any case, however, Mr Seldes' book is a genuine contribution to America's new orientation in the arts which was inaugurated by America's *Coming of Age*, in 1915, and more violently promoted in 1917 by *A Book of Prefaces*. His critical ideas seem to have been thrown into some confusion by his evidently quite recent realization that it is possible to appreciate Krazy Kat and James Joyce—and "the Medea of Euripides"—all at the same time; but his sensibility has preserved for us a really distinguished record of American popular entertainment. The lively arts may never have existed as arts, but Mr Seldes has invented them: it is he who is the artist. He has precipitated the pure crystals of American irony from the adulterated compounds in which it is usually sold; he has caught the etherial echos of our music and gaiety as they drift in the city air. To read his book is to relive the last ten years of American newspaper and vaudeville and revue, but in a purified and concentrated form—tasting nothing but the ecstatic tune, the racy flash of characterization, the moment of insane laughter. As for the trained dogs and the sentimental soloist, they are made tolerable by our companion's wit at their expense and by the scant attention we are obliged to pay to them in his company. If he were only a little less fanatical, we reflect, about magnifying the importance of the whole affair, he would be the most perfect companion in the city.

EDMUND WILSON

THISTLES DIPPED IN FROST

AGAINST THIS AGE. *By Maxwell Bodenheim. 8vo. 73 pages. Boni and Liveright. \$1.75.*

CRAZY MAN. *By Maxwell Bodenheim. 12mo. 238 pages. Harcourt, Brace and Company. \$2.*

MAXWELL BODENHEIM'S work has been honoured in almost every notable type of current publication; in that published for the politically conservative seriously cultured person, in the contumaciously aesthetic uncompromisingly intellectual magazine, in the "poets' garland," in newspapers, and in the fashionable woman's Lady-Book-and-Shopping-Guide. As is to be expected of a writer for many persons, Mr Bodenheim is many things: social philosopher, literary critic, novelist, and poet; but it is to be regretted that as a critic of modern life, he goes but part of the way, sparing himself accurate exposition of the things he advocates, impetuously dogmatizing so that one is forced in certain instances to conclude that he is self-deceived or willingly a charlatan. Our anger is stirred by his epitome of Christ's "mistakes" in emancipating humanity. He says Christ approved the repressing of instinct and that he "told people to believe with their feelings and let their minds go on a vacation." As it were in passing, Mr Bodenheim offers definitions which detain without enriching. In comparison with Chesterton's compact, expansive consideration of mysticism, his definition of it is not thorough, nor are his definitions indeed definitions, but assertions. When he says to a grass blade,

"You reach the sky because your face
Is not turned toward it,"

one feels a shrewdness of which the logic is not sound; eventually one doubts the authoritativeness of opinions which have the effect of being aphorisms; aphorisms in which there is often the mischievousness of half-statement or a slovenly abandoning of what at first had seemed to the author to be interesting. "Modern poets

. . . frequently sneer at philistines, hypocrisies, and conservative postures," says Mr Bodenheim, "and this reiterated attitude reveals a baffled longing for vengeance." Can a poet sneer? Is not Mr Bodenheim's interest in retaliation at variance with creative power? Moreover, side by side with much candour, sensitiveness, and emancipated judgement, this author's concept of woman puzzles one. Surely there is false perspicacity in an analysis which results always in the exhibiting of woman's "enticing inferiority"; which finds her an embarrassing adjunct, "cooing and crawling for your money," a creature of perfumed effeteness, of "interminable evasions," "waving surrender in the foreground," never other than a receiver of "men's ornaments and poverties." The writer's altitude of pronouncement reaches its apex in the statement made by one of his *dramatis personae*, that there is zest in bagging a woman who is one's equal in wits; the possibility of bagging a superior in wits not being allowed to confuse the issue. Suspecting that Mr Bodenheim has but half sifted the facts in his observations as cited above, one feels a false approach to life in certain of his ironies. "Highly imaginative men are accused of being demented, and consequently belittled," he says. If they are, it is perhaps because they are not laborious—not so severe in judging themselves as in judging others. In his interpretation of Christ, his attitude to woman, his impatience with his readers, one feels a grudging view, a lack of breadth, of noble reverie, of the detachment of faith.

There is more for us, however, in Mr Bodenheim's writing than cause for objection. In one of his poems he makes the crystal statement that "simplicity demands one gesture and men give it endless thousands," and he is in his own fiction somewhat stark and emphatic, showing dispatch and quick firm action, with that condensed finality of implication which is an attribute of the genuine narrator. There is too, an acid penetration which recalls James Joyce's *Dubliners* in the statement, "[his] eyes greeted the darkness as if it were an advancing mob." One values the compactness of, "the sea had lent her its skin," the power of accurate observation in the poem, *Old Man*,

"You turn your hammock and surrender limbs
To sunlight, and increase the hammock's swing,"

and the pliant irony of some of Mr Bodenheim's underworld vernacular:

"He asks me to please keep quiet! I said, 'Gee, you've got a big opinion of yourself, haven't you?' . . . and he answers, 'No, it's not that, but I know in advance everything that you're going to say so there's no need of me hearing it.'"

But again we disagree with him when he says, "The novel should be far more interested in style than in message." It is Mr Bodenheim's misfortune that he has attained this ideal, since in his work, there is much to arrest one yet not enough to detain; his work lacks substance—his unscientifically careless pronouncement for the bettering of fiction, explaining the lack on his own part of a genuine triumph; for is not style invariably a concomitant of content—the prototype of personality? Mr Bodenheim says, "Man has a far more plaintive interior than the sexologist dares to admit." We agree, and apropos of his further statement that "intellectual curiosity, emotional whimsicality, the decorative poetic touch, ironical strength, and even a plausible realism are . . . absent from American novels of the present," are hopeful of what he may give us, only to be astounded in his proffer of *Crazy Man*—a staggering dream of fleshly discontent.

It is to his poetry that we owe most; although in it, as in his prose, there is the elected right to be superficial. Aboriginal enticing femininity has been completely written of by the Greeks; again with freshness, by Restoration poets. Such subject-matter requires magical treatment if it is to receive a second glance. Emotion, truth, intellect, revenge, money, are topics about which universal sciences have been built. How then, can we accept a stinginess of content in certain of Mr Bodenheim's poems which deal with these themes, the poet deifying "the workshop of his mind," the matter in hand eluding him?

The mechanism of Mr Bodenheim's mind is delicate and his predilection for "tombstones, skulls, and lilies" is by no means ridiculous, nor is it surprising that he should be alive to the beauty of death; but among poems of distinction, there are some self-consciously macabre conceits, for example *Emotional Monologue*—

a weightless, miasmal, brittle, "studio" extravaganza in which we have the hobby for death at its worst.

Waiving the matter of content, Mr Bodenheim's technique varies in soundness. He says, "No longer do poets linger over their output, seeming to emulate the men who turn out collars and automobiles." Then why when expectation has been awakened by the piquancy and proper reserve of opening lines such as "Gingerly the poets sit," is it not fulfilled? And how is it that in what one ventures to call a very bad poem, such strokes of excellence occur, as:

"Men sit and feign industrious respect,
With eye-brows often slightly ill at ease—
Cats in an argument are more erect"?

Mr Bodenheim's aloofness from the faults of the day would not lead one to expect the weak last lines which mar many of his poems—in some lines, a not sustained effortful crispness of implication which seems an evasion, a faith in words rather than in logic, and that pitfall of aesthetic natures, the convention of the bizarre in which poetry instantaneously and disaffectingly becomes prose. Mr Bodenheim invents with firmness:

"Black angels and muscular contortions
On panels of taffeta,"

and inquires with what is to the reviewer, engaging *esprit*,

"Maiden, where are you going,
With impudence that makes your arms and legs
Unnecessary feathers?"

Admitting such a thing as exotic diction, one can sometimes applaud Mr Bodenheim's "madness" although feeling his most daring prose to be not entirely cohesive or transparently accurate. As has been said of his "tall adjectives" and verbal sleights, in one of those gentle and distinguished analyses that have been accorded him by literary experts: "Such tricks, although they often steal distinction from surprise, wear out the power of the brain to respond, and

eventually develop a resentment toward the kind of verse that leaves us jaded." A certain form of soliloquy resorted to by Mr Bodenheim has not one's entire sanction. The soliloquy is, at its best, creatively a make-shift, and when not used with consummate address, has the effect of being a not quite natural, ripe vehicle for conveying meaning; for example, *Turmoil in a Morgue*, *Impulsive Dialogue*, *Dialogue Between a Past and Present Poet*, *When Spirits Speak of Life*, *A Chorus Girl Speaks in a Dream to a Former Lover*. Perfect diction we have, in *Advice to a Blue-Bird*:

"Who can make a delicate adventure
Of walking on the ground,"

in that allusion to the "woman in penitent lavender," and in this interpretation of despair:

"She killed herself, believing
That he might become to her in death
A figure less remote and careful."

Yet why, in prose that is the work of a precisian, should one encounter unintentional rhymes: "Their heads cleared and the past night reappeared," "the sickly brawls and vapid scandals of streets and halls"? Why in either verse or prose, the words "boresome," "peeked," "glimpsed," "tawdrily," the phrase "apt to induce," and the effete one, "moments of rare insight"?

There is that in Mr Bodenheim's work which is delicately moving, as when he calls the butterfly, "aimless petal of the wind" and in

". . . you will have a wife
Like a thistle dipped in frost."

". . . your life will
Stand in a desperate majesty."

And far beyond mere sensibility, in certain work, a laconic violence with exactness persuades one of more than sensory impressionableness, as in the lines:

"An effervescence of noises
Depends upon cement for its madness."

Dissatisfied with the irony and unrest of Mr Bodenheim's spirit, we await an exposition of that which to him would make life satisfactory. He writes in one of his poems of a man who in 1962:

" . . . died with a grin at the fact
That literature and art in America
Were still presenting a mildewed, decorous mien."

Is the implication accurate? And if it is, is not the best corrective, an exemplifying at white heat of the accuser's indigenious, individual genius?

MARIANNE MOORE

WILLIAM BLAKE, THE PHILOSOPHER

WILLIAM BLAKE. HIS PHILOSOPHY AND SYMBOLS.

By S. Foster Damon. 8vo. 487 pages. Houghton
Mifflin Company. \$10.

THE history of attempts to interpret the symbolism of William Blake would make an interesting volume in itself. There is, perhaps, no artist whose works have proved more baffling to critics; certainly there is none who has been more misunderstood, and upon whom critical emphases have fallen more capriciously. The first effort to restore the obscure painter-poet to fame was Gilchrist's biography, *William Blake, Pictor Ignotus*, which fired the young Swinburne and eventually resulted in his own volume on William Blake. Swinburne the poet was far too sensitive not to inspire Swinburne the critic with a certain suggestive insight into the spirit of Blake's work; at the same time, the book remains more enthusiastic than accurate. There is no consistent attempt to fathom the prophetic books; *The Four Zoas* is not even mentioned.

The Prophetic Books, indeed, proved an obstacle in the way of most commentators. The manuscripts were inaccessible, and the meaning of the works, to the casual reader, more inaccessible still. For this reason, all the emphasis on Blake's poetry fell on the *Songs of Innocence* and the *Songs of Experience*; and to this day most people think of the poet solely in terms of *The Tiger*, or *Piping Down the Valleys Wild*. It was the more unfortunate, therefore, that when in 1893 Ellis and Yeats compiled their edition of the Works, they should have seen fit to stretch the editor's prerogative beyond recognized bounds and to revise the text so thoroughly that many passages seem completely rewritten. *The Four Zoas* was the greatest sufferer from this method. The corruption of the text was so obvious that it discredited an edition which should have been the monument to Blake the epic poet.

The unfaithfulness of Ellis' and Yeats' interpretation of the symbolism, however, was not so easily detected. Often quoted, and generally accepted, this interpretation, which is the product of

enthusiasm rather than scholarly accuracy, has acted as a further detriment to the clearer understanding of what Blake was trying to express. The most telling illustration of how far these editors wandered from the truth lies in their discussion of Blake's thirteen angels of the American Revolution, which, in their search for esoteric significance, they failed to recognize as the thirteen original States.

It would seem, then, that although the legend of Blake the Madman has long since been done away with, Blake the shadowy, half-mad dreamer is still in vogue; and his finest work has served as a sort of mental thicket where visionaries may disport themselves according to their fancy, rather than an academe where a carefully built up and clear-cut system of philosophy is expounded. Mr Foster Damon's book opportunely destroys the possibility of further misinterpretation, and restores Blake's system very much as it was conceived in the mind of the philosopher.

In the first place, the author began his work with a conviction that a mind as powerful as Blake's could not lose itself in one of those poetic labyrinths where fog is the prevalent atmosphere and moments of clarity are a happy accident. He looked for a logical system of thought, built up, unit by unit, by the various prophetic books. That he discovered this system by no means indicates that he read into the text whatever might be most convenient to his purpose; his discovery was the result of years of research during which imagination guided, but never overcame, scholarly integrity.

That Blake was influenced by Böhme and Paracelsus has long been recognized. In his careful analysis of these influences, Mr Damon was led to believe that other sources, hitherto unrecognized, must have entered into the poems, and that the establishing of these would explain much. Step by step, therefore, he retraced Blake's reading, the scope of which transpired to be enormous. The poet was not only familiar with Plato, he was saturated with Plato. Thomas Vaughan, Henry More, Cornelius Agrippa, these mystics and many others gave up the keys which were to unlock the coffer of Blake's mind. The importance of this knowledge to the commentator lay in its power to illuminate with their proper meaning the strange names and symbols which have so long stood guard over the obscurities and profundities of the poet's thought.

Besides his cogent explanation of the apparently inexplicable, Mr Damon has included a complete analysis of the various minor works, and much biographical material which will disperse many long-standing doubts and misconceptions. The identification of some of the characters in the satirical *Island in the Moon* with prominent members of the Blue-Stocking and Bohemian circles of the late eighteenth century, is doubly interesting in its relation to literary London of that period and Blake's reactions to it. Many other matters of some importance are settled beyond doubt, such as the question of Cromek's trickery and the story of the rival plates for *The Canterbury Pilgrims*, the recovery of several marginal notes and the correction of much of the text, Blake's theory of the sexes, and, particularly interesting, his version of the Lord's Prayer as contrasted with the satirical form already included in Ellis and Yeats. Here and there the interpretations are as obvious as they are ingenious; for example, the identification of Blake's designs for the *Book of Job* with the cards of the Tarot. The volume is concluded with a detailed Commentary which is not only concise, but pleasantly readable.

It is clear that Mr Damon has written a book which must serve as a foundation to all future study of William Blake. He has discovered to us a figure as unlike the madman of popular fancy as the vague occultist of injudicious enthusiasts. The system of philosophy unveiled in these pages is of that highest type of mysticism, which, however deliberately obscure in its expression, is wholly simple in its significance: the union of the human soul with that God dwelling in it who must be released in eventual perfection by a struggle through the imperfections of material existence. The philosophy in all its ramifications will offer a chance for much further investigation, perhaps by the author of the present volume, perhaps by others. But it is highly doubtful that any of Mr Damon's conclusions will be overthrown, or that any essential interpretation will need to be added to those he has given us. Furthermore, the fact that the thorough scholarship of the book is reinforced by an excellent style recommends it to the amateur as well as to the specialist.

ROBERT HILLYER

A NEGLECTED MASTER

GEORGES SEURAT. *By Walter Pach. Illustrated.*
4to. 30 pages. Duffield and Company. \$2.

IT is encouraging to note the increasing popularity of the art monograph. Painting and sculpture, by the very nature of their media, must necessarily remain of limited circulation—those who have the opportunity to enjoy original works being few and fortunate. Not all the masterpieces of the world are to be found in Europe, but the average American lives far from the Metropolitan Museum and the galleries; and such pictures as journey to the provinces are, for the most part, the execrable refuse of department stores. Originals denied, the next best thing is the reproduction. In the making of monographs the Europeans have always excelled, but at last our own publishers are waking up to the possibilities of portfolio art. This would indicate a certain public demand—the American, in his commercial hebetude, is beginning to find a place for pictures. Mr Forbes Watson has the right idea. In the foreword to a new venture which he is editing he says: "The object of the Arts Monographs is to present in workable, concise and fully illustrated form, a series of small books on various artists and subjects of art which shall not be too expensive for general circulation, and which, in text and illustration, shall stimulate the lay reader, while at the same time serving the purposes of the more special student." The first volume is devoted to Georges Seurat, and in most respects conforms to the editorial purpose of the series.

The case of Seurat is one to puzzle over. Indubitably a painter with a remarkable vision and a rare order of intellect, with the ability to conceive clearly and to execute perfectly, he has been, we might almost say, deliberately neglected. He has been dead now some thirty years, and is only just coming into prominence. During his lifetime, when Neo-Impressionism was a scientific cult, he was unrecognized except by a narrow circle of admirers; after his death his sober genius was swamped by the tangential eruption of Cubism and the childish idiosyncrasies of Futurism. Now that

the slipshod, the sensational, and the mechanistic elements of modernism have run their course, and the trend of art is toward more human issues than denatured still-lives and witless abstractions, the fame of this man is beginning to rise. And it will rise steadily and high—for it is a fame based squarely upon beautiful design.

In spite of the temporary obscurity which Seurat has suffered by reason of the more exclamatory developments of recent painting, it seems that he would have profoundly affected the artistic world ere this, but for the limited number of his canvases. Quantity in production, that is to say, the quantity which accrues with years of genuine creative experiment, is a gauge of prestige, an indispensable factor in determining the weight of a man's influence. In the field of art, as elsewhere, a vast collection of experiences carries with it an unmistakable authority; and though Seurat's imagination was of the highest cast, his influence has been limited because an untimely death—he was only thirty-one when he died—stopped his progress. His art is confined to a single conception—noble and definite, to be sure, but one attitude is hardly sufficient to grip the world with immediate force. Cézanne overwhelmed the creative mind by the immense variety of his attacks on the plastic problem; Seurat, in most of his painting, attained a greater perfection, a finer and more articulate realization of purpose; but the imposing mass of the Provençal's achievements, together with its innumerable suggestive facets, has more diversely stimulated inquiring students of the younger generation. It has led to a more comprehensive range of original activity—at least in its immediate aspects. Judging, however, from the trend of things to-day, we may say that Seurat, fundamentally, is quite as important, and eventually will prove to be as beneficial to art.

Seurat's method of painting, the minute Neo-Impressionistic formula, offers little to the modern student, but his outstanding characteristics, a constructive intellect and a truly imaginative temperament, are directly in line with the advancing thought of to-day. There is nothing in him of the Impressionistic reporter; he is a composer of experiences in the purest classic sense, and his pictures, practically without exception, are deliberate, careful, and sensible designs. One and all bear evidence of long reflection, of a mind that weighed the value of its materials, studied the pic-

torial possibilities of the subject, and discarded or added to motifs with profound judgement. Feeling, with Seurat, was not exclusively the effect of an impression; rather was it an accompaniment of his whole expressive procedure. He made no attempt to transfer to canvas some fugitive emotion engendered by a single scene or circumstance; he built up his world from the harmonious aggregate of many selected experiences. Lights and colours, the legs of dancers, masses of foliage, reclining figures, as he ordered and abstracted them, retained their intrinsic character, but in addition, became architectural components of design, precisely fitted to a purposive structure. His men and women are French, his landscapes are French, but in an idealized fashion that lends them the stamp of universality. In no instance are they mere transcriptions of particularities in the manner of the Impressionists—they are solid, conceptual units containing a richness of humanity and poetry transcending anything possible in the hit-or-miss reportorial style so deadly to legitimate painting.

It is commonly supposed that the value of art, in the last analysis, lies in its ability to charm or excite us with new aspects of nature. Certainly a gravely erroneous point of view. Great and significant art goes much deeper, and supplies us with new aspects of the creative tendencies of humanity. Ultimately we demand in pictures knowledge, purpose, and suggestiveness, and we ask that these qualities be unified, individualized, and aesthetically stated. We demand a knowledge of life—whether old or new is of no material difference—and this intelligence must be arranged with a sequential purpose. Furthermore, art should embody ideas and suggestions of growth and expansion; it should arouse within us the feeling that an abundance of fresh creativeness is in store, and that the way is open to larger possibilities of expression. Knowledge, as employed in this connexion, does not refer to an accumulation of accurate data; artistically the term connotes a sort of apperceived experience of life—of religion, social evolution, books, art manifestations, et cetera, presented in relation to personal judgements of value. For example, anatomical knowledge, as applied to art, is neither accurate nor scientific—it implies an acquaintance with a wide variety of muscular actions as they impinge upon the vision. In a word, it is simply common knowledge intensified by sustained observation.

For knowledge aesthetically adapted, and for design possessing both a meaning and a purpose, Seurat has no peer among the modernists. He is a great artist; and though his power to suggest further growth is hampered by the limited quantity of his work, and by his technical method, it exists nevertheless, for the discerning student, in the nature of his attitude. He is essentially the composer, the builder of unified and complete dramas, as opposed to the clever reporter, and the emotionalist who relies upon the vagaries of undisciplined feelings.

The volume is of convenient size; and the illustrations, when one considers the obvious disadvantage of reproducing Seurat in black-and-white, are satisfactorily engraved. The introduction by Mr Walter Pach is an admirable piece of scholarly appreciation.

THOMAS CRAVEN

BRIEFER MENTION

THE SAVAGE, by Mikhail Artzybasheff (12mo, 213 pages; Boni & Liveright: \$2). It is to be expected that this savage and picturesque book will meet with extravagant encomiums from those critics who measure the value of a work of art in proportion to its violence and brutality rather than in proportion to its profundity and subtlety. To judge Russia by this ferocious story would be unfair. The peculiar pathology of a weak and timid nature gratifying its power-lust by creating scenes of unbridled licence is so apparent that the sagacious reader remains unmoved as he contemplates a series of happenings whose "stark fatality" is so maliciously premeditated. The story is concise, vivid, arresting; but its motive-force is not that of indignant or penetrating imagination. The emotions it arouses are not purged by pity or terror.

A HIND LET LOOSE, by C. E. Montague (12mo, 264 pages; Doubleday, Page: \$2) is a novel in the Meredithian manner; the dialogue fairly crackles, and the irony rises to the surface, page after page, like bubbles in champagne. Mr Montague seldom composes a paragraph without—in his own phrase—"planing it down and bevelling it off, inlaying it with picked words of a queer far-fetched aptness." His style has an Alpine stimulation—"the sting of blown granules of ice." In the present book, the narrative is subordinate to the theme; the author has spun a spider's web which is almost too delicate for the clumsy fly which he set out to capture.

JUSTICE OF THE PEACE, by Frederick Niven (12mo, 452 pages; Boni & Liveright: \$2.50) is a novel cast in a mould of enduring values—a work of vitality, of beautiful character studies, and of sustained atmosphere. Mr Niven has taken the tragic story of a youth endowed with the artist spirit, whose aspiration so long obstructed, hemmed in, persecuted, is finally snuffed out by his mother's opposition. In the handling, there is depth and understanding; his portrait of the mother is masterly. One delights in its subtlety and in the fine intensity with which a theme which might easily have proved hackneyed has been made to yield significance.

THE ELEPHANT MAN, by Sir Frederic Treves (12mo, 222 pages; Holt: \$2.25). Sir Frederic Treves has long been known as a literary craftsman. His volume on the county of Dorset when set against other guide-book writing of its kind appears in the light of a masterpiece. The stories in the present book are exceedingly well done. The *Idol With Hands of Clay* is a terrible tale told with the greatest skill. The volume purports to be made up of authentic incidents taken from the author's long medical career, and there is not a single one of them that does not show how much of modesty and sensitiveness may be concealed behind the calm collected countenance of a great surgeon.

HAUNCH, PAUNCH AND JOWL. Anonymous. (12mo, 300 pages; Boni & Liveright: \$3.) It is a piquant experience to read this book and then to read *Antic Hay*, by Aldous Huxley (12mo, 350 pages; Doran: \$2). Mr Huxley is, of course, a much superior artist in the mere magic of words, and the jazzed-up pessimism of his latest and best book is very different from the strenuous disillusionment of the autobiography. But we prefer the life seen by Meyer Hirsch to the life seen by Mrs Viveash and the other desolating mannikins who tango through Mr Huxley's heady and electric pages. Work for the Jewish gangster and ward-heeler was an exhilarating necessity, not a means of escape from the mere horror of existing. Pleasure came to senses which, because deprived, were almost virginal; compare the diversions of Meyer Hirsch with the sophisticated Schweinerei of Huxley's unhappy characters. Moreover the background of the autobiography is, for us, impellingly evocative . . . the remote, almost unimaginable Bowery of the Nineties, the pimps, the cadets, the odalisques of Allen Street, the gas-lamps burning on the blue sea of wintry nights. And it all ends up on Riverside Drive in an atmosphere of plush and pinochle with the protagonists sitting around like pachyderms and subscribing to the Temple. Only it is not wholly for nothing; in reading this book you have tasted reality, something raw and sweet like the breath of a dark New York street near the river on a night when one hears the fog-horns. The real characters of the autobiography may live like savages and love like animals, but the characters of the novel who are probably just as real (one of them talks surprisingly like Harry Kemp) love nothing but adjectives, and they live in an atmosphere of the most ghastly and unmitigated boredom that the talented pen of Mr Huxley has ever succeeded in committing to paper. Hence the autobiography, remote as it may seem from the source of its nativity, was born under the faint green star of the *Satyricon*, while Mr Huxley, however witty he may be, is never really Petronian. He is still very young and he is prematurely sad.

TONY, by Stephen Hudson (12mo, 224 pages; Knopf: \$2) is the fourth volume in a sequence of novels dealing with an aspect of wealthy English society. The four books form a conscientious and brilliant group portrait; it has a strict validity—the validity for which historians strive and of which scientists boast. The present volume is in the form of a monologue, impeccably sustained. The narrator is a sincere rotter; and his cynical comment illuminates boldly the character of his weak, sensitive brother, the protagonist of the preceding volumes.

THE GREAT DREAM, by Marguerite Wilkinson (8vo, 42 pages; Macmillan: \$1.50). Even when they reach a considerable length, these poems give the effect of being miniatures. The first of them, a song about Manhattan, gives promise of reaching more dangerous proportions, but ends in the tiny fields "where butterflies and lambkins play." As a rule Mrs Wilkinson prefers to make notations on subjects like *A Dull Day*, or *The First Grey Hair*; writing with a grace, an innocence, a never-ending charm which in the end takes the appearance of a simper.

THE DARK NIGHT, by May Sinclair (12mo, 126 pages; Macmillan: \$2).

Mistress of the most recondite subtleties of modern metaphysic and modern psychology, a firm clear competent story-teller, Miss Sinclair proves in this little book that she can make the poetic string fit her comprehensive bow as well as the rest. Here is a tale of the oldest and simplest of all human complications related in unaffected free verse; and though in the too-good-to-live girl, the wanton seductive bad girl, the appalling poet with his "songs and dreams," we have characters that lend themselves to the worst kind of melodrama, our authoress somehow manages to carry it off. It is a Pansy Novelette for Intellectuals, lapsing again and again into maudlin sentimentality; yet the hardened critic finds himself reading it with interest to the very last line of its "happy ending."

HARVEST, by David Morton (12mo, 47 pages; Putnam: \$1.75). While neither piercing nor galvanic, with occasionally a conclusion which is not a climax and the recurrence as subject matter, of the moon, the spring of the year, and the pale beauty of woman, these sonnets exhibit genuine poetic sensibility, delicate imagination, and deft, sound execution.

THE MIDDLE TWENTIES, by John Farrar (12mo, 74 pages; Doran: \$1.50).

Despite poems so impressive as *Lucile* and *Marguerite*, one feels in this book, a lack of poetic machinery commensurate with the gravity of certain themes which the author has chosen, or has generously consented, to treat. The fanciful, Fourteenth-of-February arabesques upon jealousy and upon the marriage of *Amaryllis*, please most.

THE BEST POEMS OF 1923, selected by Thomas Moulton (12mo, 135 pages; Harcourt, Brace: \$2). Like all contemporary anthologies this collection leaves us provoked, tantalized, unsatisfied. There is just enough of the genuinely poetic to excite our thirst; not nearly enough to satisfy it. One thing is noticeable. The verse written by women seems superior to the verse written by men in this particular twelve-month span. *H. D.* steps forth, in her austere and hieratic robe, celebrating *Helen of Troy*. *Sara Teasdale* tosses down from her balcony the familiar handful of little scarlet petals. *Elinor Wylie* steals furtively forth "by weed-green lakes" with her shepherd lover. *Phyllis Mægroz* gives us a fine shiver of terror with her *Silver Bride*. *George Stirling*, like a *Ulysses* among the *Sirens*, seems to be the only male poet who can hold his own in comparison with the above mentioned ladies. His *Young Witch* is the best thing in this volume.

THE LOST FLUTE of the Book of Franz Toussaint, translated by Gertrude Joerissen (12mo, 177 pages; Brentano: \$2.50). In this collection of Chinese lyrics, early and modern, the decoratively perfect poetic properties of the East are like the titles of the poems, themselves, dazzling. The subject matter of a number of the poems seems insufficient or unworthy, but there are certain masterpieces, and since the labour of translation has been undertaken with delight, the reader deplores an ingratitude which permits him to confiscate the meaning of words with which he quarrels.

THACKERAY AND HIS DAUGHTER, *Letters and Journals of Anne Thackeray Ritchie*, with *Many Letters of William Makepeace Thackeray*, edited by Hester Thackeray Ritchie (8vo, 340 pages; Harper: \$5). These leisurely journals with their gossip of literary lions make very pleasant foot-notes to the reading of Browning, Carlyle, Tennyson, and Thackeray. Now and then, one gets a bit such as "To the National Gallery with Mr Millais. Millais shook his fist at the Raphael Madonna," and there are many small revelations delightfully made—Trollope having his man call him at four in the morning and paying the man half a crown for the privilege of *not* getting up, Ruskin's aesthetic fit over a gooseberry or a feather, Tizzy Revis, the original of Becky Sharp, refusing to point a moral, and becoming the Countess de la Torre instead, and Herbert Spencer, ordered to rest and travel with unintellectual people and so asking the Thackeray-Ritchies if he might go along with them.

AN INTIMATE PORTRAIT OF R. L. S., by Lloyd Osbourne (12mo, 155 pages; Scribner: \$1.50). We imagined that Mr Lloyd Osbourne had very little left to say about Robert Louis Stevenson, but here is a small volume made up of further reminiscences. Although he writes in the superficial manner of a man of the world, Mr Osbourne knows his public far too well to miss any chance of further elaborating the more sentimental and picturesque aspects of his stepfather's life. We are made to see R. L. S. as his disciples wish us to see him, eccentric at Davos, romantic at Monterey, constant and dauntless in Vailima. Indeed, during the last days of his life Mr Lloyd Osbourne would continually notice Stevenson looking up at the peak on the top of Mount Vaea "which is specially beautiful at dusk with the evening star shining above it," and on such occasions the abstracted expression on the great man's face, as he paced the verandah, would never fail to spoil Mr Lloyd Osbourne's game of tennis.

IN THE FOOTSTEPS OF THE LINCOLNS, by Ida Tarbell (8vo, 418 pages; Harper: \$4). The Lincoln traditions have been well sifted in this book, and many of the accepted beliefs about Abraham Lincoln have been exploded. It is time this happened. The facts are much more worthy of the man; his influence is less likely to die out with oncoming generations if his name is not linked with outworn sentimentalities of an earlier era. The book is not merely a refutation of old myths, it is a well constructed biography, detailed and light of touch, but valuable perhaps chiefly for its emphasis on Lincoln's character and his work, rather than on the tragedy of his death.

THE LAST YEARS OF H. M. HYNDMAN, by Rosalind Travers Hyndman (8vo, 326 pages; Brentano: \$4) are chronicled by his second wife who was a poet, a social revolutionist, and a prickly, clever, companionable woman. Her account is not a history of socialism in England, for Hyndman was never its leader. He was a splendid ally, and this book brings out well the attitude of English socialists on the Irish Rebellion and the conduct of the Great War. For the rest, Mrs Hyndman has given an interesting account of the half-public life of a pair of pleasant intellectuals.

LIVING PAINTERS: DUNCAN GRANT, introduction by Roger Fry (8vo, 24 illustrations; The Hogarth Press) is all that a monograph on art should be. Beautifully printed, bound with exceptional taste, and containing three pages of introductory wisdom by Roger Fry, it is a fitting tribute to one of the most genuine and original spirits in modern English art. Duncan Grant is likely to last longer than many Continental painters of wider celebration: the gay plasticity of his talent is essentially inventive, and he is, as fast as England will let him, carrying the decorative tendency of modernism into an objective field where it is not only legitimate, but assured of some chance of survival.

THE STORY OF BOXING, by Trevor C. Wignall (8vo, 319 pages; Brentano: \$6). Between the championship of Jem Ward in 1825 and that of John L. Sullivan in 1882, the prize ring suffered its most disgraceful days. Its greatest popularity, if one except the present, was in the time of Tom Cribb, Tom Spring, or John Gully: the great knuckle fighters of the Regency. Mr Wignall's history is at its best when he recounts their battles. These chapters bristle with references to Bunches of Five, the Fancy, Fistiana, Skying the Sponge, and with their reproductions of old engravings will be relished by swivel-chair pugilists and by those few real boxers who are the antiquarians of their art.

LETTERS AND RELIGION, by John Jay Chapman (12mo, 132 pages; The Atlantic Monthly Press: \$2.50). It can scarcely be supposed that many DIAL readers will go all the way with Mr Chapman, since he denies the times we live in and that in their eyes is a cardinal sin. He attributes all the maladies of the period to the increased *tempo*, and finds the chief merit of Christ to lie in the power He has to arrest speeders. He resolves this to a formula: "Pause is religion." That way, to the present young, no help lies. They know only too well that no amount of taking thought can stop the motion of the world. . . . To turn aside from Mr Chapman, however, is positive pain, for more than a note of the ancient melodies sounds in his phrases. The trouble is this noble Hamlet is too bruised by contact with the world to correctly gauge it. He ought to have been a Montaigne living apart in an ivory tower, yet continually is he tempted to touch the buzz-saw of modern life—and always with disastrous results.

MAHATMA GANDHI, by Romain Rolland (16mo, 248 pages; Century: \$1.50). It is appropriate that M Rolland should speak for the great public idealist of the Orient, summarizing his activities and doctrine. Without marked literary distinction, his little book has great value, for Mr Gandhi has made history and seems bound to make more, and the world is no longer very wide. He appears to reject more of life than did the earlier Holy Men of the East, in whose number he is counted by his admirers. His scornful puritanism suggests Savonarola and Calvin, and his zeal for reform has a Western savour. M Rolland, who is also a true Protestant, shrinks from some of his iciest extremes, but is in general romantically sympathetic.

COMMENT

JOSEPH CONRAD is dead. His life was so complete and enviable a one that his death does not shock. He had sought and won, long since, those "moving accidents by flood and field," that indispensable experience of the physical world, which remains for so many a great writer only the always somewhat wistfully imagined and always wholly bitterly untreadable stage and properties of his own howsoever avid imagination. And it had been his good fortune to attain manhood before the progressive regimentation of nature as of man had so abominably shorn the wild hair of the sea. The steamship was yet in her first awkward infancy, wireless telegraphy was not; and upon the bridge or upon the quarterdeck, a captain yet carried on his business with winds and tides and sun and stars, alone. How inexpugnably right that Polish boy was to elect the sea! And how fortunate that his courses were so often cast amongst waterways and peoples outlandish and uncharted; waterways and peoples which that eye studied with so much richer profit than any charts or tables! Profit to him and profit to us.

The sea is good to wrestle with and to grow strong upon. But life on shipboard, whatsoever the subtle and valuable alliances between the sailor and those natural forces among which he works, is life at war. And just as there is no good man who does not desire peace, so there is no good sailor who does not desire the land. The discipline of the sea, like the discipline of war, is at once an affirmation and a denial: it affirms, and most signally and most dramatically, the validity of man's governing will; it denies, and most signally and most dramatically, all those other only less central and only less valid impulses which we group under the word "play." And so the good sailor, he who has not evilly denied and disowned in himself the child, hankers after the release of the land. One knows the cottage of his heart, the gingerbread architecture of impulses long smothered below decks and now up and about, jig saw in hand; one knows the white scalloped fence, the match-board gunwale which shall so blessedly keep back all waves; one knows the hollyhocks (to witness by their stiffness that this garden

budges not), the ragged sailors (for plaintive remembrance of a past well past, of a past therefore poetical with the pathos of assured distance), the candytuft (for small and lasting companionship); one knows the intricate nookiness, the admirable gimcrackiness, the blessed stuffiness and mustiness of that beribboned and behassocked house. One knows that old sailors are old children, and that they live by their whims, rightly.

But how singular was the blessedness of Joseph Conrad! To inhabit a Kentish farmhouse, and to peer through windows at the land, and to pace up and down upon a floor; and yet to forfeit no right in the sea, and yet to run wild tides, and yet to gather obscure scars beneath wry, watery moons! To be at breakfast dry and neat, to be at breakfast urbane and a gentleman; and to carry in one's waistcoat pocket, like an odd crystal to pluck out and turn about and see odd foundering in, now and then, the Indian Ocean. Such was the rich doom of a Polish boy.

The man of letters eats his heart out for that tough and wholesome meat of physical adventure not rationed him. The leathern and indurated adventurer of perpendicular seas in his heart whimpers after the childishness of those impulsive and random sprawlings which, since the nursery, fate and ocean have only so meagrely and only by fits rationed him. Only with the shrinking of his marrow may he blow his gimcrack bubble of a home: only by surrendering the sea may he gain whimsical emancipation.

Joseph Conrad whetted his understanding and his will upon Africa and upon Bangkok. And the man whose will had mastered alien ships and alien men and seas strove with and mastered what was more difficult of mastery than alien ships or alien seas: our alien English tongue. And in the fulness of his manhood he inherited an English house and garden. And his impulses were no longer responsible to determinate stars; and he permitted them to rove, and to take the sun, and to gleam hull-down upon calamitous horizons; and to return for him and for us the invaluable incidence of imagination. And his will was yet responsible to himself, and he set it the diurnal task of creating other and divers wills; and that not one of these might wax dull for lack of the appropriate whetting-stone he created anew Africa and Bangkok.

The boy born in the Ukraine and christened Teodor Josef Konrad Korzeniowski was well loved of the gods.

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